



WORSHIP IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND



Matthew Cheung Salisbury

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Worship in Medieval England

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ARC HUMANITIES PRESS

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

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ISBN (print): 9781641891158

eISBN (PDF): 9781641891165

eISBN (EPUB): 9781641891172

arc-humanities.org

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank friends and colleagues who have been good enough, during various collaborative projects, to listen to these ideas as they have developed, especially John Harper and Sally Harper (the Experience of Worship Project; experienceofworship.org.uk), Tim Fitzpatrick (the Fragments Project; theredfield.co.uk), and Elisabeth Dutton and Olivia Robinson (Medieval Convent Drama; medievalconventdrama.org). I am also grateful for the opportunities to think about worship as “performed reality” with several patient generations of “medieval singers from Oxford” and to the Schola Cantorum of the Edington Festival of Music within the Liturgy, who have helped to bring text and music to life.

Thanks also to Jennifer, who has put up with the mess, and to Gertie, in whose company almost the entire text has been written, and whose disdain for this and every scholarly project helps one to maintain a sense of perspective.

Oxford, Christmas 2017

Introduction

This little book has two objectives in mind. By its existence in this series and by means of its counterproposals against three scholarly orthodoxies, it argues for the complexity of the liturgy as a subject for study, and shows that the surviving medieval evidence needs to be examined in ways quite different from the summary treatment it often receives. It also, however, seeks to encourage the reader in their own (future) investigations of the topic by introducing some of the key ideas, resources, and methods, and proposes ways in which they might be explored.

This introduction provides a common vocabulary and understanding of forms, structures, and genres which will be referred to, and a sense of how the liturgy fits into a wider understanding of medieval culture. Each chapter then seeks to present an alternative perspective to ideas and conventions that have sometimes become normative simply because no other possibility has seriously been considered. Many of these observations will be pertinent for liturgical studies of wider geographical scope, spanning the Western Church of the late Middle Ages, but the specifics which follow in three short chapters are focused on the English context. Readers who already have experience with the subject matter will, hopefully, find ways in which these examples challenge and question

their thinking, whilst those who are new to thinking about the medieval liturgy will find a foothold.

For these last readers particularly, an additional purpose of this volume is to unsettle the notion that liturgiology is a mysterious, abstruse, and monolithic discipline. Like trainspotting and birdwatching, the discipline of liturgical studies sometimes has a reputation for attracting people who enjoy collecting very detailed information over a long period of time, sometimes without apparent purpose, or who take extreme pleasure in seeking out and recording peculiarities which stand out only to them. There is no denying that the niceties of liturgical philology, as it were, are challenging for the neophyte to enjoy, but what follows seeks to show the reader what may lie beyond the immediate impression of convoluted structures and confusion. In fact, as [Chapter 3](#) suggests, the historical study of liturgy is something to which very few people come specially trained, and everyone comes to it with questions.

It is also undeniable that liturgical studies can attract some people for whom Christian worship is confessionally important and for whom the study of medieval forms and orders is seen as a means of informing present-day practice. In this volume I would like to suggest some ways in which the field lies equally open to those without either of these proclivities (although, in the spirit of transparency, I must nail my colours to the mast as guilty of both). Surely no subject of study is free from such motivations and incentives.

Introducing the Liturgy: Forms, Structures, Genres

In the present day, “liturgy” is a word that many people use to refer to the organized and structured worship of God, especially in churches which emphasize order and dignity,

and so its apparent relevance for the Middle Ages may be clear. Famously, the origin of the word “liturgy” is said to be found in a Greek word which has often been translated as “the work of the people,” but more recent discussions point out the fact that *leitourgia* really means something more like a public duty or obligation: still an appropriate sense. It is something of an anachronistic word to use for the purpose, however, since it was not habitually used in the Middle Ages. Neither was “worship,” of English derivation (“worth-ship”). In the texts of what (for convenience) we must really call “liturgical books,” what happens in church, if described in the abstract, might be described with a variety of names: *ordo*, *servicium*, *missa* (itself etymologically interesting, as it derives from *lte*, *missa est*), or *officium* (this last, like “liturgy,” recalls the sense of duty, obligation, or service).

It is worth keeping the sense of “duty” in mind, for attendance in church was one of the greatest obligations in the lives of medieval Christians. Attending worship was a divine imperative (St. Benedict writes that “nothing is to be preferred”); this was true for laypeople and secular clergy as well as religious. Frequent attendance was also a social reality. Laypeople were obliged to attend regularly, with some going to services every day, and priests were required to celebrate Mass (the ritual re-enactment of the Last Supper) daily. The vast majority of people in medieval Europe were Christian (an identity inherited by birth), and the progress of every life was marked, week by week and year by year, by participation in the sacraments and other rites of the Church, as well as a familiarity with the daily and yearly liturgical cycles which hallowed time.

The liturgical rites of the Church were, first and foremost, an offering to God which, in various ways, reflected the obligation of God’s people to worship him. It is no surprise that the Divine Office (the daily cycle of prayer

from Matins to Compline, a cycle of services separate from the Mass) had the poetry of the Psalms at its heart, together with other readings from Scripture and prayers. The Office was recited daily and communally by clergy and religious, but also, especially in its private devotional forms, by literate laity. While the basic form of the Office (psalms, Scripture, and petition) remained constant, individual communities would often celebrate it in particular ways laid down by tradition and in accordance with local circumstances. In addition to the rich variety of the Psalms, the mainstays of the principal offices were all canticles, or songs, from the Gospel according to Luke. Each of these canticles (the Benedictus in the morning at Lauds, the Magnificat in the early evening at Vespers, and the Nunc dimittis at Compline, before bed) reflects in a different way on the Incarnation of Christ. The Benedictus, sung by John the Baptist's father Zechariah, gives thanks for the coming of the promised Messiah, while Mary's own words in the Magnificat emphasize the transgressive justice of the Incarnation. Finally, the words of Simeon in the Nunc dimittis recall that salvation in Christ is for all. These texts, and their focus on the world's salvation, are a microcosm of the work of the wider Office.

In the case of the Mass, too, the rites were informed by the practice of Jewish worship in the Temple and derived from the Last Supper shared by Jesus and his disciples, which he commanded them to re-enact in his memory. It does not escape notice that the Last Supper was a Passover meal, which recalled the liberation of the Israelites by God from slavery. Most importantly, Jesus's words "this is my body ... this is the chalice of my blood" led to a doctrine which held that his body and blood were rendered present in the species of bread and wine (the so-called doctrine of "transubstantiation"). The sacrifice of Jesus for the world on the Cross encouraged an understanding of the

Mass, the re-enactment itself, as a sacrifice. While Christ's passion and death were themselves full, perfect, and sufficient, the priest's sacrifice of the Mass was offered on behalf of those present, and he was the vessel by which God's grace was conveyed to the faithful. Presence at the Mass was more important than external forms of participation. Again, the fundamental form of the Mass was shared across Western Christianity, with the Roman Rite predominant (of which the several versions popular in medieval England were local dialects). But regional and local practices, especially in terms of ritual and less important textual components, were frequent.

In both Mass and Office, the form of service and the words were precisely specified and long ingrained in the minds of the faithful, with the basic structure and the "Ordinary" texts remaining from day to day, and particular texts, called the "Proper," serving to reflect upon the current place in the times and seasons of the year.

Two cycles through the liturgical year governed what took place from day to day: the "Temporale" of Christological seasons and feasts (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost) and the "Sanctorale" or cycle of saints' days. These cycles also interacted with the agricultural year (which governed much of the timetable of a rural community) and with locally significant dates and devotions; special attention was accorded to the patron saint of a church and to any saints with local connexions. Churches were full of images, statues, and other foci for personal devotion as well as commemoration in the liturgy.

While it might seem that much of the liturgical text found in medieval service books was newly composed, the written propers mask the large quantity of psalms found throughout the Office which are usually specified without further comment. Furthermore, every service, and every

newly written text, could be seen as a gloss on the words and the stories of Scripture. There was much scope, even within rigidly regulated rites, for creativity and troping or expansion, often of existing materials but also seeking to mediate between them and new exegetical or theological ideas. A wide range of new texts, especially for newly created saints and for expanded rituals, were composed in the Middle Ages, to say nothing of the music (almost exclusively plainchant) which was the means by which most of the text was communicated. Polyphony was by far the exception rather than the rule, even in the later Middle Ages and even in large and important institutions. The indissoluble connexion between text and its musical setting aided memorization and learning, as well as being part of the resource on which a performer or singer could draw.

As Andrew Hughes has shown, one of the primary ways of discriminating between different kinds of liturgical material should be to separate text that is sung from text that is spoken, and it seems to be the case that “sungtext” (Hughes’s term)¹ is, within itself, more consistent and the text, at least, is less likely to vary.

Another obvious division should be seen between the Ordinary and the Proper of both Mass and Office. At Mass, the Ordinary included the Kyrie (a prayer for God’s mercy), Gloria (hymn of praise), Credo (the Creed or declaration of faith), Sanctus and Benedictus (an acclamation of God’s power and glory), and Agnus Dei (a prayer to Jesus the “lamb of God” for mercy and peace), as well as the prayers spoken by the priest which formed the centrepiece, or “Canon,” of the Mass, and numerous other prayers and texts spoken at each celebration. The Proper of the Mass included the Introit, or entrance chant; the Gradual, following the first reading; the Alleluia announcing the Gospel; the Offertory at the preparation of the altar; and the Communion antiphon. All these texts helped

the faithful to reflect on their place in their world and their relation to their God, and on feast days the special texts that were used were the source of understanding of the day's significance.

Each service of the Office had the recitation of the Psalms at its heart, with each psalm or group of psalms bookended by an antiphon, a short sung text sometimes borrowed from a psalm verse. As previously mentioned, Lauds, Vespers, and Compline had their Gospel canticles, too. The night office of Matins was divided into three "nocturns," each with a series of psalms and antiphons (spoken lessons from Scripture or the Church Fathers) and responsories (longer texts which often told their own story, and which were set to elaborate chants when the Office was sung). The Psalms followed a cycle, in which the recitation of the entire Psalter typically occupied one week's services.

The liturgy was also the means by which one's own life was hallowed. Babies were baptized, young people (and sometimes older ones) were confirmed, couples were married (reciting vows in English that would sound familiar to many today), clerks took holy orders, sinners were reconciled to God through confession and penance, and the sick were comforted (the so-called "last rites").

Some elements of the liturgy could be extremely familiar: the structure of Mass and Office, together with many of the prayers of the Mass, the canticles, and other common texts of the Office, were repeated daily. Many people would know these texts, how they sounded, and what they meant (and no doubt the common formulas of the music aided in this recognition). Other texts and chants, such as those of a feast day, might come up only once a year. As Mary Carruthers and others have shown, the memory as formed by medieval education could be very capacious, and the memories of liturgical

practitioners even more so. But in many cases reference would need to be made to a wide range of manuscripts which preserved the liturgical rites of the Church. As well as being the central reference for their contemporaries, liturgical books are the principal means by which we learn about what happened when people went to church. At the same time, we need to remember that what was in the books was probably referred to when needed, rather than word by word. For instance, a service book with melodies might be an aide-memoire for the cantor, the cleric in charge of the music, rather than a musical “score” from which all singers read directly.

In late medieval England the main books for the Mass were the Missal, or priest’s altar book, and the Gradual, which gave the chants sung by the choir. For the Office one could consult a Breviary (a book containing all the texts for the Office) or Antiphonal (which gave the texts which were sung, together with their melodies). Other books, such as Psalters, Sequentiaries, Hymnals, and Processionals (which contained specific types of material), might also be consulted or be on hand, and bishops probably had a volume containing the rites pertinent to them (a Pontifical). Most scholarly effort has been concentrated on these types of manuscripts and studying their textual and musical contents. Books of Hours are for personal use, although they contain votive offices and other extracted material which looks a good deal like liturgical text, and have been much examined because they are beautiful. Two of the most important volumes, though, are less well known by non-specialists. The first is the Customary, which explains the function and behaviour of members of (for instance) a cathedral foundation, together with specific instructions for the enactment of the Mass, Office, and the other rites. The other is the Ordinal, which gives similar instructions for the celebration of services, together with

setting out the choice and order of the texts in each service in brief.

As has been stated, religious communities observed their own liturgical patterns of texts, chants, and ritual: each Benedictine house, for instance, was independent of the others. But cathedrals which were not run by a religious order (so-called “secular” cathedrals), together with parish churches and other church buildings, were dependent on more widely shared patterns for worship, which encompassed not just the choice and order of texts and music but also the customs of the community.

It is in fact possible to see, in the average Breviary or Missal, a conspectus of all the parts of a service, but not always is every text set out word by word. This point helps us to remember the fact that the books were, in reality, reminders and references for their users, but no one read them from beginning to end. The average page of a Breviary might contain less than 30 per cent of the material that it prescribes: psalms, versicles, canticles, and many hymns would be so well known as to not require reading.

As a consequence, the versions of these services written in books were not, in the main, what people understood the liturgy to be. That was, in fact, what they celebrated day in and day out in church; the written witnesses were only ever imperfect realizations of the performed reality.

This has provoked a variety of scholarly problems for, unlike canonical texts with authors, where the authorial intention (!) and correct version can *sometimes* be revealed through study, liturgical manuscripts were by necessity both textually and musically flexible, variable in their contents, and unified mainly by their function as written prescriptions or records which relate to the performance of worship. Leaving aside the potential challenges of

philological enterprise (made particularly difficult for the rites of medieval England because of the destructive force of the English Reformation), it is difficult to say for certain what purpose any specific book might have had, or the extent of its textual authority.

The first orthodoxy I will dispute, in [Chapter 1](#), is that the pre-eminent liturgical “uses,” which were themselves based on the patterns observed in important cathedral churches and which were eventually said to be used across great swathes of medieval England, were stable and unvarying in their details. In [Chapter 2](#), I question the conventional understanding (fomented in the twentieth century) that pre-modern Christians were ignorant of the meaning and value of the rites at which they assisted faithfully, and suggest some alternative ways of thinking about their participation in the liturgy, aided by some of the chief medieval liturgical commentators. In the [third chapter](#), I present some ways that existing scholarship on the liturgy in medieval England may be profitably used, and some possibilities for future work.

Note

- ¹ Hughes, *Medieval Manuscripts for Mass and Office*, xv.

Chapter I

From Prescription to Reality: The Concept of Liturgical “Use” in England

In 1549 the newly independent Church of England issued the first edition of the Book of Common Prayer, whose principal architect was Thomas Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury. Cranmer's creation marked the first time that churches across the entire English landscape were enjoined to worship according to identical orders of service, all of which were to be found in a single volume. It also responded to the fact that the Divine Office, as it had existed into the sixteenth century, was extremely time-consuming and convoluted to recite as prescribed. Among the innovations (laying aside the very significant shift into the English language as normative) were the condensation of the Divine Office into two services of Morning and Evening Prayer and the wholesale removal of antiphons, responsories, and other aspects of the Office as it had existed, together with accretions on the Mass.

The narrative of the emergence of the Prayer Book has been a great influence on the way that its antecedent, the pre-Reformation liturgy of medieval England, has been understood for the past four hundred years. Above all, it was the shift to a single rite for the whole nation which most significantly influenced subsequent

thinking about liturgical text; as Richard Pfaff has written, liturgical scholars became affected by the thinking of a society that worships according to the texts of invariable printed books. The Book of Common Prayer was not only an example of such a volume, it was a deliberate attempt to simplify and unify a complex phenomenon. Yet it is the complexity, rather than the simplification, which is the more significant and rewarding subject for latter-day study. This chapter reveals some of the preconceptions that medieval and later commentators have maintained in their discussion and study of the liturgy of medieval England, and seeks to reshape the understanding of the development and transmission of the principal English "Uses" (patterns of text, music, and ceremonial), as well as to reconsider the fraught beliefs about the wider concept of a "Use."

"Great Diversity"

By the time of the commissioning of Cranmer's Prayer Book, many voices had previously expressed anxiety about the state of the Breviary, leading Pope Clement VII in 1529 to commission the Franciscan cardinal Francis de Quiñones to produce a new version of the Office which would make the services more feasible to say for those, such as friars and those with substantial teaching or administrative responsibilities, who had limited time in which to pray them.

Some of the work of Quiñones may be seen in the English Prayer Book, which, in its preface, "Concerning the Service of the Church," bewails the fact that the

godly and decent order of the ancient Fathers hath been so altered, broken, and neglected, by planting in uncertain Stories, and Legends, with multitude of Responds,

Verses, vain Repetitions, Commemorations, and Synodals; that commonly when any Book of the Bible was begun, after three or four Chapters were read out, all the rest were unread.

The new Prayer Book represented a further watershed moment in the history of English liturgy, the preface continues, because

whereas heretofore there hath been great diversity in saying and singing in Churches within this Realm; some following *Salisbury Use*, some *Hereford Use*, and some the Use of *Bangor*, some of *York*, some of *Lincoln*; now from henceforth all the whole Realm shall have but one Use.

No wholly consistent form of the Mass or Office had existed across medieval Britain, even after the gradual adoption of printed service books from the end of the fifteenth century onward; the preface makes a point of emphasizing this “great diversity,” within which there were various families and identifiable traditions. Among the “Uses” the preface mentions are Salisbury (often called “Sarum,” after a contraction of the Latin name) and York, understood to have emanated from the two eponymous cathedrals. Both Uses, as we shall see, proliferated across the southern and northern ecclesiastical provinces respectively, mainly as a consequence of new statutes and ordinances which called for their adoption. At least in the southern province, this adoption may have been a consequence of the exclamation, by Giles de Bridport, bishop of Salisbury in 1256, “The Church of Salisbury shines like the sun in full orb among the Churches of the whole world in its divine services and those who minister in it.”¹ But to suggest that the liturgical pattern of a cathedral might be usable, unmodified and wholesale, in churches, chapels, and cathedrals that varied in size and provision would

be untrue. In this chapter, I challenge the notion, implied by scholars of the nineteenth century and unwittingly perpetuated ever since, that in England broad regional liturgical patterns such as the “Sarum Use” enjoyed any degree of uniformity. Instead, worshippers in medieval England observed rites that were based on such cathedral Uses but were the products of voluntary and involuntary change and evolution across time and space.

Wider Dissemination of “Sarum”

The earliest indication that the “Use of Sarum” was intended to be observed as a transregional practice was a statute of 1223 for St. Davids by Gervase, then bishop. He ordered that the Lady Office and the Office for the Dead should be sung “secundum ordinale Sarum” in that cathedral.

From what models from what date might the “Use of the Cathedral” have been copied? Liturgy did not stand still. Whenever Sarum or York Use was prescribed by a statute, worshippers might have inherited books from another location or had them newly copied from exemplars. For instance, when Chichester Cathedral formally adopted the Use of Sarum in the 1420s, the dean, William Milton, left in his will his great missal to the high altar, “if the use of Sarum was observed there,” and a canon, Simon Northew, bequeathed two graduals and two processional, “since it had changed to the use of Sarum.” Where might these books have come from? If not from Salisbury itself or its scriptorium, what other amendments might have been made to their contents in order to make them suitable for use elsewhere?

The profusion of Uses mentioned in the preface may in fact be designed to show the “great diversity” which was apparent in the pre-Reformation rites of the English Church, rather than the full range of possibilities or to set

forth the existing state of play. Cranmer's words have often been understood, however, as a full and accurate depiction of the liturgical landscape, and nineteenth-century scholarship sometimes seeks to discriminate between the sources of these five uses, even though two of them (Lincoln and Bangor) were probably not used very widely beyond their respective cathedrals. The definition presumably also refers to customs (*consuetudines*)—that is, duties as well as texts. The wider point is that Cranmer's entire passage seems to suggest that one might be able easily to discriminate between witnesses of a certain number of Uses.

It is also worth noting that "Sarum" and "York," whatever they meant, were Uses which were supposed to be spread over a significant geographic area, not only the city in which the relevant cathedral was located, as was more typically the case on the Continent, where, for instance, before the Council of Trent many dioceses were smaller and liturgical patterns more localized. The "use of Evreux" or the "use of Burgos" might be said to be relatively limited; that "of the Roman Curia" rather more widespread. Each Benedictine house, too, had its own liturgical pattern which might be shared by a daughter-house, but not more widely. It was in the other orders (the Carthusians, Cistercians, Dominicans, and Carmelites in particular) that really significant efforts at standardization were successful. The Dominican Order, around the time of its master general Humbert of Romans (1256), promulgated a number of manuscript exemplars, which helped scribes to check, correct, and create new service books. The Carmelites, too, promulgated an Ordinal (that of Sibert of Beka, written at the beginning of the fourteenth century), which was quite successful in determining the contents of liturgical books that could be found in the various Carmelite houses.

It is also worth mentioning that the cathedral that was part of and served by a monastic house (a so-called “monastic cathedral,” as opposed to a cathedral operated by a dean and chapter of secular canons) was an almost exclusively English phenomenon, which meant that the usual approach, using the liturgical books of the cathedral as a model for those in churches in the diocese, would not be practical: the monastic *cursus*, or order, was longer and probably required the participation of more clerics than the secular.

The more serious question, of course, is how one might apply the “Sarum” liturgical pattern to a church (or even a cathedral) for which it was not designed, and for which the relevant performing forces, altars, images, and so on might not have been available. What might be the practical implications of such a prescription as appears in the statutes above?

There are some suggestions that this question was being asked even at the time at which Sarum was supposedly proliferating across the south of England. A pre-Wycliffite treatise ca. 1370 speaks spitefully about the Ordinal, the liturgical road map which helped clerics to determine the precise form of service which was necessary, but which itself required a good deal of interpretation:

The ordinal of Salisbury letteth [prohibits] much preaching of the gospel ... If a man fail in his Ordinal men hold that great sin ... Ah, Lord, if all the study and travail that men have now about Salisbury use with multitude of new cost[ly] portos, antiphonals, grails, and all other books were turned into making of bibles and in studying and teaching thereof, how much should God’s law be furthered and known and kept.²

I have suggested elsewhere that “Sarum Use” may be more of a stamp of quality of the perceived correctness

and excellence of the liturgical contents of a book than of any particular contents, although of course it is true that so-called Sarum books, based on exemplars which are also assigned to the pattern, subscribe to the same choice and order of liturgical texts and chants. It is in the more precise details of ritual (and, indeed, of any texts which are not sung, such as lessons) that Sarum witnesses are more likely to vary. Falconer Madan, Bodley's Librarian, wrote that looking at two liturgical *incipits* would "suffice to differentiate nearly all local Uses,"³ but the problem is more substantial than that.

Transregional Rite, Local Church

Even if all "Sarum" books could be associated with a ritual pattern which descended from that of the cathedral, what date would the appropriated liturgy correspond to? If Salisbury Cathedral subsequently adopted some feast day or other liturgical accretion, was it adopted by other institutions supposedly following its model? Leaving aside the fact that a single celebration of Mass or Office may not have been performed from a single book and individual books might vary in their specifics, what would happen if a ritual action or, for instance, a procession relied on the presence of a specific architectural feature, personnel, or object in the context for which it was originally designed? Doubtless the practical option would be to make pragmatic decisions about what should be included and omitted.

Perhaps the modern-day *editio typica* of the Roman Missal, for use by the worldwide Catholic Church, or the current edition (in many provinces that of 1662) of the Anglican Book of Common Prayer can help us to consider some of the challenges of this approach. In the former case, a rite which is itself the third edition of a synthetic text which has been written for deliberately widespread

application contains a variety of options, in which the more elaborate elements can be toned down. The seventeenth-century Anglican Prayer Book (itself a version of an earlier text) was designed for use in the widest variety of contexts, from private prayer to cathedral service. Yet a Communion service advertised as “BCP” may take a wide variety of forms which a neophyte would find virtually unrecognizable, though this may be a result of the BCP having very few prescriptions other than the form of words; it has very little to say about music or gesture, and there has always been a high degree of tolerance for variation.

This is not to say, though, that every element of every witness was subject to major variants. Few if any significant differences exist among the texts which were sung (so-called “sungtexts”: the antiphons, responsories, and hymns). More likely to see change were rubrics, the instructions which gave the information about how to perform the service, and lessons, the readings which came either from the Bible or from the Church Fathers (and which might be written in full in a liturgical book or which might be given in *incipit*). Both rubrics and lessons might have been constructed with reference to other volumes. It is also worth thinking about ritual: leaving aside the question of how ritual instructions for a cathedral might be observed in a parish church, if they were at all prescriptive, how might such instructions for one church be observed in another?

Still more likely to vary were the saints who were honoured with commemoration in a volume. No two manuscript liturgical calendars which survive from late medieval England are identical, as they tend to be influenced both by the proclivities of the original scribes and by later practice in a particular ecclesiastical context. The calendar, in theory, indicates which saints were venerated, on which days, and with what degree of solemnity: feasts

were given a classification, and often the number of proper lessons was given, three or nine being the most frequent. The calendar did not necessarily indicate how much proper material (if indeed any at all) for a saint was actually present in the volume (as an injunction to celebrate the feast in the calendar might be observed satisfactorily by employing texts from the Common of Saints, a special section with generic material to be used on the feast days of apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and so on for whom proper material was not present). A church dedicated to St. Helena, for instance, would probably observe her feast with considerable solemnity, and therefore might have in its choirbook a proper office—though, again, it might not. What significance had the construction of a proper Mass or Office for a saint? Surely it demanded a very considerable investment of time and effort to create, and an opportunity for the confector to produce elegant, high-register Latin prose or verse. From the perspective of the clerks and clergy responsible for its enactment, it was also a mandate to learn and practise chants which were not previously known, and to fit the celebration into the wider context of worship.

The Term “Use”

Medieval manuscripts and printed books do employ the term “Use”—*secundum usum Sarum*, for instance—though this term was often interchangeable with “customs.” We use the term as it has been understood for several centuries in critical writing about the liturgy, albeit with qualifications as to what it may imply.

Why have scholars been so preoccupied with liturgical Use? This question may have many answers. Most obviously and importantly, perhaps, because it was the system of customs by which the most important cultural practice

of the Middle Ages was carried out in a particular locality, and therefore it is the ritual context in which can be seen all the aesthetic features (such as music) which we have inherited, though denuded of that context; this, of course, is vital for those such as musicologists and art historians who have devoted considerable attention to a particular aesthetic feature. It also involves practical advice on the enactment of liturgical rites which required considerable training, the full details not being given in the sources themselves. So we need an understanding of the ritual context in order to understand the practical working-out of what can be found in the manuscripts.

But perhaps one of the principal reasons that scholars for several hundred years have been preoccupied with the notion of “Use” in England, in particular, is that each was a trans-regional series of rites that was part of the ecclesiastical patrimony of Britain and a focal point for identity, which had (in the eyes of some) been unfairly desecrated and never quite restored.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century onward there was a flourishing of interest in liturgical matters, partly as a consequence of a general Romantic striving after origins, but especially as a consequence of a new desire, within British society, to consider the foundation of what Stuart Piggott has called “the new fabric of government and society”⁴ in its medieval antecedent. This impulse, too, demanded an early and distinctive origin for the Church in England. Still more importantly, the complex, multisensory, and intertextual genre of the liturgy was not simply an aesthetic appropriation but an attempt to recapture the fervour and uniformity of medieval devotion.

This insular activity was happening at the same time as the restoration of the Benedictine abbey of Solesmes, which began in 1837. Its first superior, Dom Prosper Guéranger, intended for it to recapture and, indeed, live

according to the model of the great Benedictine monasteries of the past, especially through the restoration of the forms of Mass and Office with which the inhabitants of those monasteries would have been familiar. It was not an easy task, and occupied an entire studio of liturgical scholars striving to produce new editions based on what they felt to be the oldest, and therefore best, exemplars. This was all carried out in a context in which no other French religious community had devoted any meaningful amount of attention to chant, and in which most of the local sources (and local knowledge) had been destroyed at the Revolution.

A similar period of iconoclasm—the English Reformation—had done away with much of the English context too (about one in 1,000 liturgical manuscripts has come down to us), and both in England and in France there was a very strong motivation, throughout the nineteenth century, to reclaim a lost textual tradition.

Liturgiology and the Search for Origins

Perhaps the most influential modern writer about “Sarum” was Richard Gough (d. 1809), antiquarian and topographer and an important authority on British church architecture of the Middle Ages, for whom (writing in his *British Topography*) “[n]o cathedral has preserved such a variety of service books for its Use as Sarum ... [It] not only regulated the form and order of celebrating the mass, but prescribed the rule and office for all the sacerdotal functions” (vol. 2, p. 319). In the second edition of *British Topography* (1780), Gough writes about the liturgy of Salisbury Cathedral, describing its service books and the extent to which the pattern spread “almost all over England, Wales, and Ireland.” In a footnote he cites an authority which claims that “in right of [Sarum Use] the

bishop of Salisbury was precentor in the college of bishops whenever the archbishop of Canterbury performed divine service." Gough says he decided to "leave it to the connoisseurs in music to determine whether the Sarum chant differed from that of York, Bangor, or Hereford" (vol. 2, pp. 319–20), as some continental Uses were said to do.

Gough is at pains to describe all the types of liturgical book, and his own collection of manuscripts and printed books itself (now in the Bodleian Library) contained a significant number, which he had studied. But Gough's familiarity also extended to the statutes and documentary evidence which help to trace both the adoption of the "Sarum Use" and attitudes about what that might have meant.

Surveying this evidence, one might surmise that it was a fairly straightforward process, and probably enacted in a similar way to when Thomas of Bayeux, first Norman archbishop of York, imported books of his own tradition to the northern province. In the main, the documentary evidence suggests that Sarum was simply adopted on such and such a date. Did this mean that they purchased or copied a selection of new liturgical books which described themselves (as they often did) as Sarum? For more humble foundations, this would have been challenging, as a parish church alone might need about six manuscripts to say Mass and Office, and manuscripts might take as much as a year to copy. Alternatively, they might have purchased or otherwise acquired Sarum books by donation or from some other source. Service books do certainly appear as "new" or "old" in inventories, and occasionally (as will be seen below) some judgement is made of their contents.

Two related problems present themselves: Sarum *from where* and Sarum *from when*?

In theory, "Sarum Use" pertains to the liturgy of the cathedral, and perhaps its diocese if that pattern was

widely adopted. But, if new manuscripts were copied other than in the cathedral scriptorium or from a cathedral exemplar, what other features might they have had, drawing from the wider context of where the source texts were used? How might this relate to the customs of the cathedral itself? When, indeed, were the exemplars taken from Salisbury? Of what date are the several manuscripts which it must have taken? Do they represent the cathedral's liturgy (or the pattern it used) from a particular time? What features are and are not present in the written record? All these questions help to identify the many unknown parameters by which "Sarum" might have been adopted in a single location, for which the generic answers are not known, and for which the documentary sources are often quite summary in the detail that they provide.

Documentary Evidence

Whatever the widely disseminated "Sarum Use" might be, it certainly had its origins in the 1220s, under Bishop Richard Poore (rather than a much earlier putative rite popularly attributed to Osmund, first bishop of Salisbury, which pertained to an earlier incarnation of the cathedral), though Richard Pfaff thought it unlikely to be something identifiable until the new cathedral was more or less complete around 1290. Nigel Morgan has suggested that the spread of "Sarum" features may in fact have taken place mainly in the thirteenth century. It then appears to have been promulgated very widely across the province of Canterbury by around 1325.

Other than the manufacture of new books according to authoritative exemplars, it seems that the "Use of Sarum" was imposed by means of reference to the Ordinal, the liturgical reference document. The Sarum Ordinal is first mentioned in a statute for St. Davids in 1223, which ordered

the Lady Office and the Office for the Dead to be sung *secundum ordinale Sarum*. This statute presumably related to the timing and frequency of these votive offices, but may also have come to mean the form they took as well. We do not have an early text of the Ordinal, which is the cause of much frustration; in fact, there is no witness earlier than the fourteenth century, by which time the rite was arguably quite widespread. The revised or “new” Ordinal also came into existence at some point between the 1320s and 1400.

Sir William Dugdale’s *Monasticon anglicanum* gives a range of foundation charters and other documents which prescribe various features, some of which include the formulation “as they appear in the Sarum Ordinal” or “according to the use of Sarum.”

The 1226 foundation at Merewell, Hampshire, was ordered by Henry de Blois, bishop of Winchester, that “the divine office is celebrated following Salisbury” (Dugdale, *Monasticon*, vol. 6, p. 1344). In 1420 a statute of William Heyworth, bishop of Lichfield, ordered the *forma ordinalis Sarum* in relation to the antiphons of Matins and Vespers, in the starting (of chants) on double feasts, and in the intoning of psalms. Other such statutes of similar date simply stated that collects, and the Office of the Dead, were to be observed “just as are given in the Ordinal according to the use of Sarum” (p. 1263). Antony Bek, bishop of Durham, promoted the “manner of singing psalms according to the custom of York or Sarum” (p. 1335).

In Chichester, the manner of the transition was articulated:

[T]here arose a discussion ... between the aforementioned dean and canons concerning the change of the use of divine service, in the church of Chichester, to the use of the church of Salisbury. And this change of the use of services was finally agreed, pleasing all and singular. And [a

benefactor] granted them certain books of the said use of Salisbury to the glory of God and for the advancement of divine service.⁵

The *usus ecclesie Saresberie* was, then, apparently identifiable both in practice and in written witnesses, some of which also identified themselves as such. But how can this understanding be upheld by what may be found in the books? How do we use the present evidence? How can one easily tell what is a “Sarum” book and what is not?

One means by which books can be very summarily compared is by looking at their calendars, which in theory are a ready reference by which we can identify which feasts and other commemorations were observed and their classification. For some cataloguers, these have been the principal means by which manuscripts have been compared and their contents adjudged to belong to a particular locality, based on the specific patterns of saints’ days that appear. I have elsewhere compared 132 liturgical calendars from English books to identify what the “baseline” may be for Sarum and, indeed, for York and other patterns.⁶ Such a normative version of Sarum, York, and Hereford calendars does indeed exist; but all of them share over 80 per cent of their contents (many being normative in other dialects of the Roman Rite). Even more importantly, many calendars also show evidence of their place of use and manufacture, which can often be gleaned from a particular set of saints’ days imposed at a particular time by statute. Some of the calendars can be seen to be influenced by statutes in a particular diocese; others have similar calendars whilst also sharing some other aspect, such as institutional affiliation.

The point to understand is that the presence or non-presence of a particular saint in a particular calendar is no valid indicator of place of use or manufacture or of its

liturgical Use. Indeed, a saint's presence in a calendar may not even be an indicator that he or she appears elsewhere in the contents of the manuscript. A saint such as Etheldreda may be of great local importance in Ely, but even there she may not have her own proper Mass or Office, as it would be perfectly legitimate—indeed, likely—to employ proper material from the Common of Saints for the feast, which would do the job just as well as her own propers; there is no need for a newly made set. If the observance has been relatively recently promulgated it might make more sense for it to be celebrated with familiar texts which were already imbued with saintly significance.

From the late nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth a great deal of effort was expended upon the subject of medieval English liturgy, much of which was supported by established figures as well as a wide range of amateur scholars, who together founded societies and schemes for the publication of their researches and editions of the materials.

The Henry Bradshaw Society, dating from 1890, was greatly preoccupied with producing editions and other scholarly material which related to the rest of Europe. But it was “founded to edit by preference works which bear upon the history of the Book of Common Prayer [to throw] light upon the first steps taken in framing the Mattins and Evensong that are to this day still in use in the Church of England.” In his edition of *Cranmer's Liturgical Projects*, John Wickham Legg summarizes some of their thinking about the “change of rite” in 1549:

In Cranmer's time the Roman and the local Breviaries, like that of Sarum, had departed from [the ideal of continuous reading of Scripture and the Psalms], and yet it is possible to detect the original scheme in the books of the period, whether written or printed, containing the Divine Service; though hardly to be found in the daily practice of

the clergy, for the overfilling of the Calendar with festivals had caused the weekly recitation of the whole psalter to cease, and the lessons from the Bible to be replaced by the legends of the saints. Thus a very grave departure from the original purpose of the Divine Service had been brought into the Western Church.

The late Victorian interest in antiquarian work was an excellent stimulus for amateur liturgical research, particularly from members of the High Church faction in the Church of England, who, for reasons of establishing the distinctiveness and integrity of the Church in/of England within the universal Church, were concerned with establishing the lineage of their own worship from the general origins of Western Christianity (see, for instance, the participation of John Henry Newman in this discourse in his Tract 75, "On the Roman Breviary as Embodying the Substance of the Devotional Services of the Church Catholic"). Anglo-Catholics saw the reintroduction of the vestments and rituals of the (unreformed) Western Church as permitted by the "Ornaments Rubric," a statement in the 1559 Elizabethan Book of Common Prayer which has remained in all subsequent editions:

[H]ere is to be noted, that such Ornaments of the Church, and of the Ministers thereof, at all Times of their Ministration, shall be retained, and be in use, as were in this Church of England, by the Authority of Parliament, in the Second Year of the Reign of King Edward the Sixth.

This rubric implied, for Anglo-Catholics, that the vestments, ornaments, and rituals (though not the texts) of the liturgy preceding the Prayer Book, in their view, stretched back to the emergence of "Sarum Use" and its eventual spread, if not to the origins of Christianity in England. The recovery of a conveniently desecrated ancient precedent for a distinct but apostolic origin for the Church of England was

one means of establishing its catholicity. For the Plainsong and Medieval Music Society, too, the leading motivator for study was the rediscovery, for the purpose of revivification, of what they understood as “Sarum.” The “Sarum cult was indeed the common denominator which held together this small group of men,” according to the society’s historian, Dom Anselm Hughes—but “the attempt to revivify the Sarum Use ... faded away with the discovery by liturgical scholars that it is not the historic English tradition, but a comparatively late innovation from France,” namely a descendant of the liturgical patterns brought to England by Norman clerics after the Conquest. The society was so mainstream as to have the celebrated Victorian composers Sir John Stainer and Sir Arthur Sullivan as vice presidents.

To aid in the endeavours of those who sought authentic historical data, the Plainsong and Medieval Music Society itself published a number of facsimiles of Sarum manuscripts (discussed below), edited by Walter Howard Frere, an Anglican bishop, religious, and liturgical scholar whose interests also included the revision of the modern Book of Common Prayer in the 1920s. Several editions of the Sarum Missal were prepared, by Francis Henry Dickinson and by John Wickham Legg, with the whole translated into English by F. E. Warren.

Naturally, the belief that all witnesses of the Sarum or York rite were unified or identical could be easily disproven through systematic study of the surviving manuscripts; this, however, did not typically happen. As well as being difficult to navigate for the reader or editor, liturgical sources were dispersed through the cathedral and university libraries of England and more widely, not often in the same place at the same time, and, before photography, quite difficult to compare without preparing extensive transcriptions. But work to catalogue the manuscripts of the great collections in Britain required a few individuals

to develop the necessary skills to work with liturgical materials. Among the few individuals willing to undertake such work was Montague Rhodes James (d. 1936; discussed in Chapter 3), *cataloguer extraordinaire*, who developed a superior working knowledge of their contents. Another less known figure was the historian Edmund Bishop (d. 1917). Like James and many others working on liturgical books, Bishop was a polymath in unrelated employment. As a civil servant in the education department of the Privy Council, Bishop (a convert to Roman Catholicism) had a great deal of spare time, during which he spent long hours in the British Museum becoming familiar with manuscripts, and he prepared an edition of papal correspondence with the English Church which was released by the celebrated series *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, as well as extensive study of the liturgical books in London libraries.

But Bishop's awareness of the diversity of liturgical texts was of great value, and his story is a salutary and instructive one. Having heard of an effort to produce a new supplement to the modern Roman Catholic liturgical calendar, *A Menology of England and Wales*, which included saints little known in the present but ubiquitous in the devotion of earlier centuries—that is, “as far as authentic records permit, ... all the Saints connected by birth, or by their labours, or by death, with the present Ecclesiastical Province of Westminster”—Bishop took it upon himself to seek the evidence for these disappeared saints' cults in the medieval witnesses.

Bishop's working notebooks, deposited close to the end of his life in the British Museum, give a conspectus of this work as well as explaining his motivations for studying the historical sources of the past in order to inform the future.

If in considering question of a restoration of English Saints in the Calendar, I turn to the past, it is not in a spirit of

romanticism, but because (if we will but take the trouble to search for the facts and try to understand their bearings at that time) mediaeval accounts (especially in concerns ecclesiastical and liturgical) are strongly marked by practicality and good sense, and by a character of fitness for circumstances. *The old may be therefore to us today, if we so please, full of practical and direct instruction.*

Here was his motivation for examining these relics of the past: by examining their contents, and taking notice of the differences and commonalities, one might assemble a picture of genuine liturgical practice.

Bishop's study of the calendar led him to transcribing very minutely the contents of the English liturgical books in the British Museum as well as at Lambeth Palace and some other libraries, and this labour, as well as the provision of the notebooks to Fr. Richard Stanton, an Oratorian who was responsible for the compilation of the volume, was gratefully acknowledged: it was to Bishop that "whatever measure of original research the volume contains must be considered due." Bishop's unpublished comments in the final notebooks indicate some wistfulness that more material and more details were not used.

His highly detailed and comprehensive awareness of the manuscript evidence meant that Bishop was in a very good position to be able to comment on some of the wider questions about the nature of what he called the "'Sarum' superstition." He writes:

The "superstition" cherished by Anglicans in regard to "Sarum", who would raise it to a sort of national rite, might well induce Catholics to investigate the origin, follow the extension and fix the limits of the rite.

Bishop rightly understood that the Anglican, mainly High Church, preoccupation with discovering the origin and nature of "Sarum Use" was caused by the aspiration that

the Church of England, and its liturgy, had an ancient and noble origin equal to and distinct from the Roman Rite as it had developed in continental Europe. This of course is not true, and Bishop knew it: his essay on the connexions between English and other Norman service books is a well-known part of his essay collection, *Liturgica Historica*, published posthumously. As he was a Catholic convert, this was both amusing and annoying to him, and his antipathy to Anglican historians is recorded in some of his writing.

Bishop's unpublished notebooks for the *Menology* project also contain some of his thoughts about the question of how, and especially why, "Sarum Use" might have been adopted in the rest of southern England:

Cause of spread of Sarum Rite.

Its prevalence in England depended on 2 main causes:

1. The existence here of monastic cathedrals, whereby in many dioceses the Cathedrals by the very nature of the case could not serve as the liturgical model;

2. (The cause of less importance, but still a cause) the great size of the diocese of Lincoln and the situation of its Cathedral at the far end of it, whereby its influence, though it was held by secular canons, was necessarily weakened; moreover the invasion of Sarum in the Lincoln borders was facilitated by the fact that the diocese straggled down thro' dioceses with monastic cathedrals (Ely, Norwich, Coventry) the clergy of which had been reduced to seek for some rite not that of the Cathedral.

In other words, in addition to the inflexibility of the liturgy at monastic cathedrals, the influence of Lincoln Cathedral was limited in its own diocese, which occupied a significant proportion of the southern province. It is worth noting that each monastic cathedral had its own liturgical use, the Benedictines, for instance, not sharing more than the usual degree of similarity.

Bishop continues:

But ever when Sarum rite was adopted the Sarum ceremonial was not introduced, the old ceremonial being retained. Again the new Cathedrals (former monasteries) of Hen VIII, in all probability adopted Sarum: what else could they do? (Gloucester/Oxford/Peterborough/Chester.)

For Bishop, this presumably meant that the words and music adopted the Sarum pattern, whilst other elements found in the Sarum customary were not retained. This would be unsurprising, and a reasonable way of making accommodations in the process of the uncomfortable adoption of an unfamiliar liturgical rite.

Other more recent scholarship has eventually confirmed Bishop's suggestions about how "Sarum Use" was widely distributed, and scholars from Walter Frere onward have expressed some degree of incertitude about how precisely it was taken up in manuscripts for use in a variety of locations. Sherry Reames has even gone so far as to say that there are so many "surprising divergences"⁷ from the modern editions in the rest of the textual tradition that the old model of consistent Sarum must be questioned. Outside specialist circles, however, the wider awareness of the variability of liturgical elements is limited, especially among those in cognate disciplines who need to refer tangentially to liturgical material. [Chapter 3](#) treats some of the challenges faced by modern students using scholarship of an earlier time.

In reality, the choice and order of texts in Sarum manuscripts is quite consistent (probably thanks to the successful employment of regulatory documents such as the Ordinal, though that too was subject to a degree of variation), but there are a number of textual families into which the surviving manuscripts might be placed. Sungtexts were rarely prone to meaningful variation (though there were of course

minor accidental variants typical of manuscript transmission), but rubrics, lessons, the choice and extent of proper material for saints' days, and the calendar in general were clearly less subject to regulation, as these texts, compared against the surviving manuscripts, show just how specific and local some prescriptions in manuscripts could be. Looking at these differences helps us to identify how, and to what extent, official prescriptions for the adoption of feast days or of specific features were carried out, and in which geographical areas.

The motivation for the Catholic *Menology*, the rediscovery of a passionate engagement of the faithful with their Church through the appropriation of a faded age's devotional aids, was shared by the Ritualist party within the Church of England, which was preoccupied with the symbolism of, and historical precedent for, liturgical ritual. Among the outgrowths of this party was the Cambridge Camden Society (later known as the Ecclesiological Society), founded by such persons as John Mason Neale (later known for his contributions to hymnody and for the resurrection of plainchant melodies from medieval England into that modern repertory). The Ecclesiologists held that the success of the medieval Church could be recovered by studying the surviving evidence, especially church buildings and their ornaments, but including the medieval liturgy. To that end a large number of churches were built in the later nineteenth century which embodied in their design and decoration some of the most prevalent features of their medieval predecessors. The liturgical consequences were to use those buildings in the most appropriate way, which was, naturally, something else demanding research and serious attention. "Liturgical science," according to the society's official publication, *The Ecclesiologist*, "ranks far higher than architectural skill or knowledge."⁸

In the Church of England, of course, it was illegal for any liturgical rites other than those of the Book of Common Prayer to be used in the conduct of worship, but this provided an opportunity for the Ecclesiological Society to experiment with the addition of newly recovered rituals, vestments, ornaments, and other non-textual features to the existing rites, but avoiding (for the most part) any legal challenge. In 1848 it released a guide to the use of such features, *Hierurgia Anglicana* [*English Rites*], subtitled *Documents and Extracts Illustrative of the Ceremonial of the Anglican Church after the Reformation*. This work was a collation of materials which supplied the evidence that such practices had survived the break with Rome, and were therefore legal in light not only of the Ornaments Rubric but also under practice of a much later time. See, for instance, this extract, which seeks to establish the use of incense by noting its early provenance:

In the chapel of Bishop [Lancelot] Andrewes [d. 1626] there stood on a table ... "a triquetrall censor wherein ye Clarke putteth frankincense at ye reading of the first lesson" ... as in the Popish Masse and Churches. A little Boate out of which the Frankincense is poured etc. which Doctor Cosens had made use of in Peter house where he burned Incense.
(*Hierurgia Anglicana*, p. 125)

A more convoluted argument arises for the use of the chasuble at celebrations of Holy Communion, which practice became uncontroversially legal only in 1965, on the basis that its presence is implied in the rubrics of the First Prayer Book of Edward VI (1549). These state that the priest is to wear "a white Albe plain, with a vestement or Cope," provided that, if the Communion itself was not to be celebrated (for want of anyone to communicate), the priest was to wear the cope through the reading of the Ante-Communion. The argument in *Hierurgia* suggests

that this direction implies the use of the chasuble if Communion were to proceed, by discussing the alternative scenario explicitly.

Hierurgia is set up to supply the evidence for post-Reformation liturgical practices, these having been destroyed roundly and definitively by the “Great Rebellion” (that is, the English Civil War), but in almost every case, as with the two examples above, to ensure that the Ornaments Rubric is properly honoured. But the implication is, of course, that these practices had a much longer history than the one it documents. In their own words, the editors hoped

to collect so great a number of illustrations of Anglican ceremonial as shall enable their readers to gain a much clearer idea of what the Anglican Church has allowed, and shall convince those who may have distrusted ... that such ceremonial is entirely compatible with the most dutiful allegiance to our Communion.⁹

The reconstruction of what the early Church of England had permitted was, then, an attempt to rediscover treasures, such as had been observed from time immemorial until then. The “Sarum” ceremonial being the best known and undoubtedly the most widely distributed, it was an ideal starting point.

The reader may wonder why “Sarum Use,” or my insistence on the need to acknowledge variation, may be of any importance whatever. The significance lies in the fact that, to this day, those who need to know something specific about the medieval liturgy, but who do not have a huge amount of time to invest in it, are at present content simply to consult whatever resource may be convenient

(online ones being a particular favourite). The precedent for such a policy may be found in the scholarly habits of nineteenth-century liturgiologists, who were only too interested in finding a coherent, consistent liturgical Use on which the patrimony and the distinctiveness of the pre-Reformation English liturgy could be based. These scholars were at the same time preoccupied with a model of liturgical uniformity which approximated the stability of the Book of Common Prayer, though dating from a time far before the textual homogeneity achieved with the advent of printing.

More often than not, one exemplar was adopted as normative, and, whatever one might think, that is simply not enough. Imagine comparing a fourteenth-century choirbook with the modern printed “Brev. Sar.” of Procter and Wordsworth (see [Chapter 3](#)), or a psalter with a facsimile of a single manuscript. In theory, both subjects for comparison do the same thing, but in reality they are quite different.

I recall what is meant to be a diverting anecdote about clerics in the 1480s, who were said to go around checking “hundreds of printed missals,” astonished that the contents of scores of printed books were in fact identical. The joke is supposedly on them, but it is really on us, whenever we forget why they were doing this peculiar checking; perhaps checking whether two or more liturgical books were able to work together was something quite normal for them. One can easily imagine a situation in which, preparing for a service, the same clerics once realized that all the books in their choir were telling them different things ...

Understanding the promulgation of “Sarum Use” beyond its own cathedral and diocese requires us to take into account a variety of influences on every ecclesiastical foundation which took it up. The adoption of a Sarum

calendar, in which certain features are very important, is one. The appropriation of texts, music, and ritual from books already associated with Sarum is another. Less understood is the likely situation in which those who commissioned new books, and those who produced them, were influenced by a variety of factors, including different exemplars, various recensions of the Ordinal which regulated most of the liturgical working out, and various impulses affecting manuscript production.

In fact, as I have argued elsewhere, every manuscript, and even every printed book, should be treated as a unique and independent witness.¹⁰ This needs to be done not only to prevent false impressions about how the liturgy might have looked, but also because these written witnesses all serve as partial, imperfect records of a rite which was undoubtedly imagined by their creators as acted-out reality. Reading every witness as an individual also helps us to identify the other ways in which these manuscripts may have been constructed, edited, and used, and how liturgical material was understood and transmitted over a wide geographical area and over a long period of time.

If we are convinced of the need to return to first principles as concerns the term "Use" and the way that it is employed both in discourse and in orthodoxies about liturgical patterns, perhaps a few possibilities should be outlined.

"Use" can refer to the pattern of texts, music, and ritual which is particular (or "proper") to any foundation, whether large or small, and whether it is elaborate or simple. Rather than anything specific or quantifiable, it may be a blanket term, which in the Middle Ages may well have indicated "orthodox" or "correct" rather than "as they do at Salisbury." Nowadays it is sometimes used in a similarly vague way to summarize contents: it is an easy catch-all for a cataloguer (or other scholar) to say

"This is a Sarum missal, sharing some of the variant forms recorded in Legg's *Sarum Missal*," and leave it at that. Perhaps it would be better to think about what happened in church (the Use of that church) as an all-encompassing experience which was lived, wide-ranging, and based on experience as well as written record. The "Use" of a church is whatever happens there, but transregional Uses must be understood to be the opposite of that typical understanding, for (paradoxically, from the perspective of the scholarly consensus) they raise more questions than answers, and force us to consider their relative merits.

However prevalent it may be, the idea of liturgical "Use" with respect to medieval England needs to be treated with caution when considering scholarly works of the past, which tend to minimize the value of the surviving evidence by conveniently pigeonholing it. In [Chapter 3](#) I consider more extensively the question of how we may be able to use the evidence from service books and other material to reshape the way that the discipline of liturgical studies treats evidence.

Notes

¹ Quoted in *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1066-1300*, vol. 4, *Salisbury*, ed. Diana Greenway (London: University of London, Institute of Historical Research, 1991), 90.

² John Wycliffe, "Of Feigned Contemplative Life," in *The English Works of Wyclif, Hitherto Unprinted*, ed. Frederic David Matthew (London: Early English Text Society, 1880), 187-92 at 192.

³ Falconer Madan, "The Localization of Manuscripts," in *Essays in History Presented to Reginald Lane Poole*, ed. Henry William Carless Davis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 21-29 at 22.

⁴ Stuart Piggott, *Ruins in a Landscape* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1976), 20.

⁵ *Register of Henry Chichele*, edited by Ernest Fraser Jacob, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937-47), 505.

⁶ Salisbury, *The Secular Liturgical Office*.

⁷ Sherry Reames, "Unexpected Tests for Saints in Some Sarum Breviary Manuscripts," in *The Study of Medieval Manuscripts of England: Festschrift in Honor of Richard W. Pfaff*, ed. George Hardin Brown and Linda Ehrsam Voigts (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 163–84 at 163.

⁸ Quoted in James F. White, *The Cambridge Movement: The Ecclesiologists and the Gothic Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 52.

⁹ He continues: "Let us endeavour to restore everywhere amongst us the daily Prayers, and (at the least) weekly Communion; the proper eucharistic vestments, lighted and vested altars, the ancient tones of prayer and praise, the meet celebration of fasts and festivals (all of which, and much more of a kindred nature, is required by our ecclesiastical statutes)."

¹⁰ Salisbury, *The Secular Liturgical Office*, passim.

Chapter 2

Participation and Devotion in Worship

If you were somehow able to travel back in time to the Middle Ages and to attend a service in church, there might well be some features which would be recognizable from liturgically traditional churches of the present day. Along with familiar architectural features and a recognizable layout of the church building, one might be aware of the position of the congregation in the nave, physical separation from the altar and ministers, the presence of musicians, servers, clergy, and others carrying out specific roles, and stylized ritual actions which would help to tell the “story” of the service. There might be a sermon. If the service was a Mass, the focus would be on a solemn remembrance in words and actions of the Last Supper shared by Jesus with his disciples. There would also be dialogues between the officiating minister and others, mirroring the cyclical nature of the liturgy between praise and petition, or between heaven and earth, in a human sphere and context.

This is not to say that one would feel entirely at home with a medieval liturgical celebration. The service would be in Latin. If celebrated at the main altar of a church, any meaningful action would take place in an area probably quite separate from the congregation, if any, and

the congregation, if indeed there was one, quite likely would not interact with the clergy and choir, who would be concerned with their own parts of the service, which, while linked, were carried out quite independently. These striking features of the imagined medieval liturgy, together with what remains in the collective memory about the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church before the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965, before which Catholic liturgy had been more or less similar in form since the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century), cause us to believe that medieval services would have been difficult to follow and hard to understand, and that they did nothing to encourage the personal faith and spirituality of the individual worshipper. Quite unfairly, modern accounts tend to do a very good job of criticizing the medieval liturgy for not having all the things that modern church services aspire to: variety, an emphasis on the individual worshipper's experience (whether exegetically, spiritually, or kinaesthetically), and—above all—participatory elements, meaning especially the opportunity to contribute by speaking or singing.

This chapter seeks to challenge preconceptions about the ways lay and clerical people understood and participated in the liturgies of medieval England, and argues that they did indeed participate, in quite different ways from what may be imagined. Specifically, medieval Christians were discouraged from noisy vocalization and instead encouraged to consider intertextual, allegorical interpretations of what they were seeing and hearing, and to use the public rites of the Church, properly explained, as an inspiration for personal devotion. The literate, too, were able to “participate” in worship by hearing and recognizing the links between rite, Scripture, and sung text, revealing new insights.

The Modern Doctrine of Active Participation

Once again, we must attribute some of the inclinations of present scholarship on the medieval liturgy to a widespread apathy and misunderstanding, the first founded on a widespread ignorance of liturgical literacy or experience among the wider medievalist community, and (when this is not the case) the second founded on the reception of a misguided approach to “active participation” inculcated in the twentieth century by scholars who, if they have any experience of attending church, are too young to remember the state of affairs before the middle of the twentieth century. Yet, as “medievalists,” we are tasked with being cautious and critical when examining a culture which may give the impression of conforming to the conventions of our own.

I suggest that one of the reasons we are reluctant to frame the medieval liturgy as anything other than a clerical preserve, and especially one linked to the monastic way of life, is that we ourselves do not understand what it seeks to do, and that we, like those who were tasked with thinking about participation in the liturgy after the Second Vatican Council, have a skewed view of that debate.

Paradoxically but predictably, the misconceptions we might have about participation and liturgical literacy in the Middle Ages may be associated with twentieth-century efforts towards the reform of worship. The term “active participation” in connexion with the liturgy is most often heard in relation to the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, which was the first document to be released by the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council. It calls on the Church to promote and practise forms of worship that allow for “full and active participation” by all the faithful. The Latin term *participatio actuosa* used

by the Fathers actually comes from an earlier document, the 1903 *motu proprio*, *Tra le sollecitudini*, which outlined a vision for music in the context of worship. Both these documents of the Catholic Church had in mind a hope for the faithful to become engaged with the words and actions of the liturgy as vessels for their own prayer offered to God through their presence at the liturgy.

Some have argued, however, that the recommendations of the Council, which placed such a strong emphasis on active participation, have resulted not in a greater degree of personal engagement but in a dramatically increased and sometimes tokenistic participation-by-vocalization. In other words, the faithful may have much more to sing or to say, but that may not have improved their spiritual engagement with the act of worship. The linguistic question, too, is up for discussion: some argue, for instance, that the intention of Vatican II was not to render the *entire* text of the Mass into vernacular languages (as eventually happened) but, instead, to encourage a greater understanding among the faithful. Indeed, the Fathers of Vatican II had hoped that liturgical institutes would be founded at which those responsible for worship would study; to date, few such institutes have been founded, and those which do exist tend to focus on advanced research, and not on the widespread liturgical education of the clergy and faithful.

It is worth pointing out that the resolutions of Vatican II were closely studied by other churches with a formal liturgical tradition (Anglicans and Lutherans among others), and that the resolutions themselves owed a great deal to a broadly ecumenical “liturgical movement” around the end of the nineteenth century which sought to bring worship back into a central place in the lives of Christians. A wish for the faithful to unite their own devotional attention and spiritual focus with the intention of liturgical rites was, then, a principal feature for all these churches.

Much has been written about the liturgical stance of Vatican II and the “reform of the reform” of more recent years, and this is not the place to go into greater detail. But it is worth pointing out that, compared with the faithful of the Middle Ages, modern-day congregations seem to be much more involved, at least vocally, in the liturgy, especially that of the Mass. The typical mode of participation is through vocalization in a rite which has been vernacularized, not only in its text but also perhaps aesthetically. Now, in the twenty-first century, we view this as a normative way of participating.

As medievalists, we must resist applying such notions to an earlier period, because such a perspective clouds any proposal that medieval liturgy “spoke” to its contemporaries, for whom it was certainly a central, culturally rich, and obligatory activity which did not lend itself to individualistic thinking. Rather than an opportunity for the faithful to express themselves, the medieval liturgy built a Christian community (the body of Christ) which had the opportunity to encounter the truths that were at the centre of their lives through words and sensory experiences which they held in common, and which they held in succession to Christians of past eras. Participating in the rites meant that the medieval worshipper entered into the central cultural experiences that shaped the way everyone viewed the world.

Liturgy as Commentary

The medieval Christian was presented, above all, with the complicated allegory of the Mass, which no one understood innately. As a consequence, theologians and exegetes were at pains to develop an understanding of this central act of Christian worship, which had been instituted by Jesus, but which had rapidly assumed a

highly regulated and ritually complicated form. The other rites of the Church, together with the texts of Scripture, also demanded interpretation, so that those who were there could understand the implications for their own lives and spiritual practices. There developed a rich tradition of liturgical commentary, beginning with the scriptural evidence for the rites and their meaning but often going much further, and the theology of the liturgy itself was subject to the commentators' influence. Over and above all, liturgy served as a gloss or commentary on Scripture (which was at its heart) and on the entire Christian experience, which was mirrored in liturgical life. Medieval Christians therefore benefited from a very long history of commentary on the rites of the Church, especially baptism and the Eucharist.

An early example of liturgical commentary comes from the author of the *Didache* (the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles"), a first-century text which reflects the thinking of Jewish Christians who were faced with the introduction of Gentiles into their community. The *Didache* author supplies this prayer at the Eucharist, offering an allegorical reading of the sharing of the bread which emphasizes its saving power:

As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, but was brought together and became one, so let thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom, for thine is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever.¹

The medieval doctrine of transubstantiation, as a fully developed theological consensus, was preceded by a long history of interpretation. Justin Martyr (ca. 150 CE) writes:

For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having

been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.²

Isidore on Learning about the Liturgy

After the works of the patristic writers, one of the most striking and well-distributed commentaries on the liturgy in general is that by Isidore, bishop of Seville (d. 636). He is of course remembered as the author of the *Etymologies*, a serious if sometimes factually misguided collection of the eponymous genre. Isidore is less well known as the originator of one of the first wide-ranging systems of clerical education in Europe. All these accomplishments probably pale in comparison, certainly in his own understanding, to his work to study and preserve the Mozarabic liturgy in its homeland, and the treatise *De ecclesiasticis officiis*. In this text, Isidore carefully sets out the biblical and patristic justification for his understanding of “the origin of offices”—that is, the practices of the Church—as well as his own theories. The so-called “Hispano-Mozarabic rite” which Isidore describes was a product of the largely independent development of regional liturgical traditions controlled by their own independent ecclesiastical hierarchies, which were subsumed, organizationally and ritually, by the Church in the eleventh century. Oddly for someone who was enthusiastic about his own region’s distinctive liturgy, Isidore writes that the celebration of the Mass “is realized in one and the same way throughout the entire world.”³

Liturgical commentaries frequently assumed the perspective, or the needs, of the uninitiated or those they considered to be weak-minded, and Isidore’s was no exception. Reflecting on the merit of music in worship, he notes

that the “melody of sweet songs” can help souls to be “moved more easily to compunction,”⁴ quoting Augustine’s *Confessions*, which endorsed singing in church so that the “weaker spirit might rise up to the feeling of piety” (*Confessions* 10.50). He also explains the long tradition of offering prayers “like those that Christ constituted” and listening quietly to readings:

It is proper that when psalms are being chanted they be chanted by all, that when there is praying all pray, and that when the reading is being read, silence is made, so that it may be heard by all.⁵

Pertinently for medieval Christians who were not literate in Latin, Isidore was conscious of the illiteracy of many Christians in his own time, and recognized the problem that they could not express themselves or their faith in the words of Scripture without a significant amount of help. It was thus, in his words, that the Creeds collected the essential beliefs which are extracted from Scripture, “so that, since many of the believers do not know how to read, or because those who do know how are not able to read the Scriptures because of the involvements of the world, by retaining these things in their heart they may have sufficient salutary knowledge for themselves.” In a passage explaining the function of the *lector* or reader, Isidore writes that “[he] ought to be imbued with learning and with books, and adorned with the knowledge of meanings and words ... He will [thus] possess the strength of the pronouncement so that he might make a deep impression on the minds and senses of all the people for their understanding.” The responsibilities of the ministers to impart God’s word in appropriate ways to the faithful are of great concern. In a passage consonant with Isidore’s own interest in ministerial training, he insists that clerics “should apply themselves to continual training in doctrine,

on readings, psalms, hymns and canticles”—for they “have delivered themselves up to divine worship, so as they give effort to knowledge they may administer the grace of their learning to the people.”

Much is made of the connexion between worship on earth and the ceaseless worship of heaven. On the subject of the most famous prayer that Christ constituted (the Our Father), Isidore separates the petitions, seven in number, into eternal (the first three) and temporal, “which nevertheless are sought so that eternal things might be gained.” In a similar way, of the frequent use of *alleluia* Isidore writes that it represents “future hope. It signifies ... that our future action is nothing other than the praise of God.”⁶

Amalarius on Allegory and Participation

The next truly significant liturgical commentary emerges around 200 years later in the form of the *Liber officialis* or *De ecclesiastico officio* of Amalarius of Metz, sometime archbishop of Trier and Lyon (d. ca. 850), whose exegetical work on the liturgy remained highly influential throughout the Middle Ages. His work, like that of Isidore, shows the influence of several generations of earlier writing which touches on liturgy, including the *Ordines romani* and documents from the Carolingian court. Amalarius’s own work stretched beyond this well-developed text; over many years of interest in the subject he produced several other works, which do not seem to have come down to us. The *Liber officialis* itself underwent a couple of revisions, and the vast number of manuscript witnesses suggests that Amalarius “ranks among the most widely read and copied authors of the Carolingian era,” with his work widely known and circulated. It offers to us some important insights into the ways medieval clerics and scholars wrote and thought about liturgical material.

The *Liber officialis* also tells us something about Amalarius's own questions about the liturgy and what ambiguities there might have been in the popular understanding of various rites, and seeks to answer them systematically. According to his most recent translator, Eric Knibbs, Amalarius was convinced of the validity of "a vast, complex system of allegory" which helps to bring the various elements of the liturgy together; indeed, people of his age "were convinced of nothing so much as the validity and importance of applying elaborate layers of allegorical exegesis to the Bible." Amalarius shows that he felt this exegetical system was equally useful for the explanation of liturgical sign and symbol.

Amalarius's *Liber* is full of explanations of ritual actions, but it also supplies advice to those who are present in church. In a passage explaining the blessing of chrism, Amalarius borrows from Isidore: balsam is one of the "aromatic" plants, "either because they seem suitable for use of altars for divine invocations, or because they are shown to mingle and mix with the air." Consequently, "the smell of the balsam ... signifies the renown of good virtues, which have been widely scattered through the operation of the Holy Spirit's grace," and the balsam is added to the oil "because celestial splendour shines in the face of Christ."

Amalarius shows, importantly, that there is a connexion between belief in the mind and action with the body. He argues, following Paul (1 Cor. 6:20: "Glorify and bear God in your body"), that, since Christians have been redeemed "from the devil's servitude," they glorify God "when we give him thanks for his redemption, and we bear him in our body when he dwells in our soul ... in our thought and life and understanding." By means of holding God in the mind, the mind calls the body to obedience, and the Redeemer clings yet closer to the soul that the body carries.

Much of the *Liber officialis* is given over to the explanation of specific portions of text and ritual from Mass and Office. Amalarius explains the difference between a reading—the declamation of a passage from Scripture—and a responsory, the musical and non-scriptural commentary on a reading, as “the same as that between first principles and the arts themselves” (II.3.11). It is one thing to be instructed through a reading “as if through the first principles and basic ideas of piety.” But if this does not succeed, or if “there is yet someone who is deaf [,] let the cantor come to him with his sublime trumpet [and] perhaps he will be stirred.” The obedient, too, are moved by the singing of the responsory like oxen encouraged in their daily work by their ploughman:

The earth is furrowed as the oxen drag the plough when the cantors, drawing their innermost breath, drag forth a sweet voice and present it to the people. [...] They goad their own heart, as well as the hearts of others, to tears and to the confession of sins, as if laying bare the hidden parts of the earth.

Explaining the Magnificat, Amalarius (following Bede) suggests that it should be sung in the evening “so that our mind, as a period of quiet approaches, and after it has grown tired and distended with various thoughts through the day, may gather itself to the unity of its own contemplation” (II.4.7). Similarly, Compline is the closing of the mouth both to speech and to eating and drinking.

It is no surprise that Amalarius is adamant that those who are present in church must know that “they are to abstain from all immodest and foolish speech and buffoonery” (I.1.12), eschewing “improper and profane thoughts as you pray to God” (II.3.19) and standing in church with reverence and fear, avoiding “excess words and laughter” (II.4.38), laughter being “a great evil in immoderation.”

Framed more positively, Amalarius's arguments are for an inward, spiritual participation in the rites:

When we come together with our brothers as one and celebrate the divine sacrifices with God's priest, we should be mindful of modesty and discipline; we should not exhale our prayers at random with confusedness, nor hurl the petition we want to commend to our modest God with restless loquacity, since God does not listen to the voice, but to the heart.

(II.3.23)

The passages which are sung, too, are to be truly meant: "We should sing canticles and psalms and praises to God *more in our mind than with our voice*" (II.3.2; emphasis added). The Our Father is said in a raised voice, and not secretly, because (as St. Cyprian writes) no one asks "to be freed from evil solely on his own behalf. Our prayer is public and in common, and when we pray, we pray not for one person but for the whole people, because we, the whole people, are one" (II.3.29). Care is also taken to address the question of "unlearned commoners [, who] often ask at what point in this whole Office the Mass begins, so that, if for some reasons they do not attend the whole office, they may be able to know at which offices they should present themselves." Amalarius's commentary is one which may have helped clerics to find meaning in the complicated rites of the liturgy, but it also undoubtedly helped those same clerics to offer explanations and encouragement to the devotion of the faithful.

Durandus: Liturgical Commentator *par excellence*

Perhaps the most famous late medieval liturgical commentator was William Durand ("Durandus") (d. 1296). Like

Amalarius, he employed the work of his predecessors as source material when creating his own compendious treatise. Durandus was a canon lawyer whose other important work, the *Speculum iudiciale*, had a similar effect on that field (he became known as the *Speculator*); he later served as an adviser to Popes Gregory X and Boniface VIII. But his main liturgical writing was carried out as bishop of Mende, in which capacity he also laid out a series of local liturgical documents for his own church and diocese. Durandus is also known for his work on the Pontifical, the handbook for bishops, which “became the definitive medieval pontifical [,] unrivalled in the Latin Church until the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council.”⁷

Durandus called his commentary the *Rationale divinatorum officiorum* (the *Rationale for the Divine Offices*). The title is itself the subject of article 16 of its prologue. The *Rationale* was widely circulated and very well known, being attested in over 200 medieval manuscripts; it was also the second non-biblical book to be printed at the Gutenberg press,⁸ and translated in the fourteenth century to make it more widely readable. The modern editor of the *Rationale* describes Durandus as “unquestionably the most renowned liturgical scholar of the later Middle Ages,” whose work “superseded [all other commentators] within only a few years,” and the nineteenth-century liturgical visionary Prosper Guéranger described him as the “final word” on the medieval understanding of the liturgy.

The *Rationale*, like the other texts we have discussed, makes plentiful use of the preceding tradition of commentary, as well as the rich Christian tradition of allegorical reading of texts, symbols, and events. Timothy Thibodeau would call Durandus a compiler and not an innovator, perhaps in the sense that he tends to follow his sources—Isidore, Amalarius, and the *Summa de ecclesiasticis officiis* of John Beleth (d. 1182)—quite closely. It is interesting

that Durandus notices, and points out, that from place to place liturgical practice may vary: “Numerous variations in rites can be discovered in the divine liturgy” and “a variety of customs is tolerated by the law.” It is most useful, for his purposes, to see that which is “more common and more ordinary.”

Durandus has no qualms about calling out the ignorance of clerics as well as that of the laity. He writes, “Most of those priests who manage the Church’s affairs and conduct its worship on a day-to-day basis have little or no understanding of what the Divine Offices signify or why they were instituted”; they are “the blind leading the blind.” Furthermore, it is necessary for those who act to have “probable reasons and causes” for their actions. The things that happen in ecclesiastical rites and offices

still, in fact, conceal a multiplicity of truths that we cannot plainly see; and in the Mass, the events leading to the Passion of Christ are represented in the Preface, so that those things will be held more firmly and more faithfully in our memory.

Durandus proceeds to explain in detail the ways in which one idea can lead, allegorically, to something related but quite different, outlining the four senses of interpretation (literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical). The literal sense, as in the interpretation of Scripture, prioritizes the actual form and seeks the context in which it was created. The allegorical sense helps to point towards what it may represent. The tropological or moral sense explains how one should act as a consequence, and the anagogical sense reflects on the future events of salvation history.

In eight volumes Durandus’s *Rationale* seeks insight into the building of the church, its interior and exterior (volume 1); the ministers of the Church (volume 2); vestments (volume 3); the Mass and Office (volumes 4 and

5); the *Temporale* and *Sanctorale* (volumes 6 and 7); and the calendar (volume 8). A few examples of his allegorical readings will suffice.

In volume 1, Durandus speaks of the church not only as a fulfilment of the Jerusalem Temple but in Christological terms and in much closer detail. The sacristy, for instance, may be compared with the womb of Mary:

The sacristy—the place where the sacred vessels are stored, or the place where the priest puts on the sacred vestments—signifies the womb of the most blessed Mary, in which Christ clothed Himself with the sacred vestment of His flesh. The priest processes to the people from the place where he put on his vestments because Christ, proceeding from the womb of the Virgin Mary, came into the world.

Durandus also remarks on the “case in which the consecrated hosts are preserved,” which, while it signifies the body of the Virgin, must also be seen, whether the hosts are consecrated or not, to represent the human memory, “for man ought continually to remember the reception of God’s gifts.”

His treatment of pictures and ornaments reads similarly, making it clear that one does not venerate an object for what it is, but what it represents: “We do not worship images [,] because this would be idolatry, but we venerate them for the memory and remembrance of things done long ago.”

Other interpretations are less moral and more elegant: the seven services of the Office (excluding Matins) represent the seven ages of man, and in some ways also the life of Christ; at the hour of Compline, being the hour at which Christ prayed with his disciples and at which he was placed in the tomb, the Church “rightly gives thanks and praise..., for when the number of the elect is completed, at that hour, the joy of the Saints will be complete.”

The prologue gives a very apt definition of allegory:

Allegory is present when what is said literally has another meaning spiritually; for example, when one word or deed brings to mind another.

These principles, discussed in many medieval texts, including book 2 of Dante's *Convivio*, are illustrated in Durandus's account of the discussion of the Ambrosian liturgy. In the context of a wider discussion of the relative merits of the Gregorian and Ambrosian (Milanese) liturgies, the two missals were discovered respectively torn apart and scattered, and resting on the altar, implying, respectively, that the Ambrosian rite should be preserved only in Milan and the Gregorian widely distributed.

The idea of allegory might be obvious in the context of medieval scholastic enquiry, but we should not underestimate its wider significance and validity even among those with no formal training in exegesis. Liturgical commentary, which is “nearly as ancient as Christianity itself,”⁹ is dependent on allegorical interpretation, which itself is part of all intellectual discourse. Both Scripture and practice are living traditions that continue to have meaning—including for recent interpreters such as ourselves within a community of faith, and the working out of the meaning is ever-changing.

In the context of participation, then, being present at the liturgy to experience these images and ideas meant that there was an opportunity to engage with the ideas that these phenomena represented, and presence at the celebration at the Eucharist was itself a participation in the sacred mysteries of the enactment of the sacrifice of Christ. In this sense, the enactment of the liturgy was a

point of intersection between the lived experience of the everyday and the otherwise unfathomable enactment of salvation history through the ages.

A Guide to Devotion: *The Lay Folks Mass Book*

While treatises may offer one way of looking in on the phenomenon of participation and understanding the liturgy, another may be considering evidence for personal devotion. The so-called *Lay Folks Mass Book* (sic) is probably the best known of the devotional guides of this kind. It was translated into English (from another vernacular: French) around the end of the twelfth century, and exists in a textual tradition which suggests the English represented a northern dialect. It is, for its editor Thomas Frederick Simmons, "the only document ... that enables us to know the prayers which the unlearned of our forefathers used at mass." It is thought to be of greater significance than books such as Primers because it provided practical instructions for use.

The Lay Folks Mass Book is not a gloss or commentary on the action of the Mass but, rather, a series of prayers which follow particular identifiable actions on the part of the priest which those present at the celebration would have been able to see. By connecting these actions with particular moments in Christ's Passion, the lay Christian was encouraged to see the continuity between the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross and the sacrifice of the Mass. Simmons argues that it is in fact we who are divergent in presupposing models of participation and activity:

These parallel devotions may be strange to the notions of those of us who are used to the common prayer of priest and people in a common tongue, and the continuous arrangement of offices, alternating between priest and people in the reformed church of England; but it will be

evident that Dan Jeremy [presumed author of the Mass Book] did but adapt the principle of an example which had been set by the church in very early times.

This is not to say that *The Lay Folks Mass Book* could have been universally used, or its principles adopted by all: it was written for educated people, and intended to be read; Simmons thinks its translation into English may indicate its use by a rising middle class who were literate in the vernacular.

Above all things, the reader was reminded that making noise, in general, was to be avoided: “[Dan Jeremy] says you should good [in]tent take that you at the mass no ‘jangling’ make” (*LFMB*, pp. 4–5, line 23). Instead, they should adopt an attitude of reverence throughout, watching and listening for moments of importance as the ritual unfolded:

And when thou has this all done / Kneel down on thy knees
soon; / If they sing mass or if they say, / the pater-noster
rehearse alway / till deacon or priest the gospel read. /
Stand up then and take God’s heed.

(*LFMB*, pp. 16–17, lines 149–52)

Throughout the collect and the epistle, the faithful were to say the Our Father, until the clerk reading the gospel started to do so. At the reading of the Gospel they were to stand up, make the sign of the cross, and pray that they might properly receive God’s word. At the Gospel (proclaimed in Latin) the instruction was to draw one’s mind to Christ.

Similarly, during the Canon of the Mass the faithful were instructed to say a prayer and then kneel and offer thanksgivings and prayers for the whole Church and world in order. We do not know whether such prayers, or others recommended by this or other texts, were said out loud, or prayed inwardly.

At the ringing of the sacring bell, at the consecration of the bread and wine:

A little bell men is to ring / then shall thou do reverence
to jhesu christ awen presence, that may loose all baleful
bands; kneel and hold up both thy hands, and so the
levation thou behold.

(*LFMB*, pp. 38-39, lines 401-4)

At the point at which the priest holds out his arms in the form of a cross, the faithful were reminded to pray for the dead. Finally, they repeated the Our Father towards the end of the Mass, until it ended.

The rubric is good um while to look, the prayers to con
withouten booke.

(*LFMB*, pp. 58-59, lines 624-25)

Simmons's edition of *The Lay Folks Mass Book* also includes "A Treatise of the Manner and Mede of the Mass," dating from the late fourteenth century. This document, in verse, expresses that the Mass is good to hear for all Christians ("Yong and olde, more and lasse, Full good it is to hear A Mass": *LFMB*, p. 128, lines 5-6), and that all should be familiar with the actions, together with reflections on the worthiness of the recipients of God's grace.

Every man both more and lasse
Should have it in his mind
How that they should their service say
And privately their prayers pray
To him that may un-bind.¹⁰

Even if the unlearned find it difficult, it is easy for them to learn when to join in the service, and when to pray privately. In Simmons's gloss, "[A]ll ought to pray as the priest, as if they knew what he said" (*LFMB*, p. 130). It

reminds the reader to pray for others, including the priest. There are prayers for penance and forgiveness, as well as an admonition to prayerful silence, using a long exemplary tale about Augustine of Canterbury, who once saw two women talking during Mass and a devil who wrote down what they said.

The treatise holds that the Lord's Prayer is the model for prayer both in the world and in the world to come: nothing more is needed. The faithful should stand at the Gospel, even though they may not understand a word of it; it is what Christ wrought in the world, and it is doing honour to that work by standing. They should kneel at the consecration.

A further text included in Simmons's edition is John Lydgate's *Merita Missae*, which offers prayers for the faithful to use at bedtime, midnight, at rising, on going into church, and (especially) at Mass, including praying for the priest at the Offertory, and meditating on the sacrifice of the Cross during the consecration.

Watching and Listening as Prayerful Engagement

Just as it was a means by which ordinary Christians, by attending, could situate themselves at the place of the sacred mysteries and even approach Christ in his sacramental presence, the liturgy also served the faithful as a gloss on Scripture. For the illiterate, who were not familiar with the many words and phrases which liturgical language borrows or alludes to, the actions of the liturgy brought to life some of the stories they would have heard or been taught, and served as a beautiful and striking backdrop to their devotions. For those for whom the words of Scripture were familiar, and who were able to reflect on the particular words and phrases which were said and sung, the

liturgy was a unifying point around which everything else revolved. Nowhere could this be more clear than in the context of the words of Jesus, spoken by the priest at the consecration of the bread and wine at Mass.

Excursus: The Perspective of the Literate

Hearing about the visual cues that the faithful could have used in order to follow actively the proceedings of the liturgy, we may too easily forget the fact that in society there was a cadre of people whose entire education had been designed to help them contribute to worship and to gain insights from its intertextual environment. Especially in monasteries and other places of learning, most of the clerics were literate and musically trained so that they could play a part in the enactment of worship. Their education may well have begun with the Psalter. The Rule of St. Benedict, the *Regularis Concordia*, and other monastic guides prescribe very clearly the need for juniors to learn the Psalter and progressively to increase their capacity for singing parts of the service.

Here too the liturgy served as a gloss or expansion of the interpretation of the psalms: a liturgical psalter, of course, contains ferial antiphons, said at the Office in the ordinary course of the week if no other provision (such as for a feast day) was made. The text for some such antiphons was taken from the psalm they accompanied; others were drawn from the wider field of liturgical language. These antiphons were perhaps the first and most familiar layer around the core texts of the Psalter. Each provided a gloss, or special insight, on the interpretation of a psalm by focusing the mind on a particular idea. On feast days and other observances there were proper antiphons, which supplied another idea which might have been drawn from newly written texts, giving an alternative

interpretation which then aligned with others which might be remembered.

What significance might expansion or troping of the liturgy have for this model? Every new interpretation contributes to the patchwork of exegesis and interpretation. Writing a new Office for a saint's day, for instance, might simply be a devotional exercise and a spiritual offering. It might, alternatively, be an attempt to consider a well-worn idiom in a fresh light, or to tease out another possible solution to a spiritual question.

Liturgical composition for the Office is a model of intertextual richness. The entirety of the Office is built around the psalms, which take up the majority of time and effort to prepare and perform. These texts, invariable in themselves and typically sung at least once in the course of a week, are adorned in different ways with antiphons which textually and musically offer contrast and insight. The text of the antiphon may or may not be taken from the psalm, but the chant formula or tone used to sing the psalm is derived from the mode of the chant for the antiphon, further illustrating the connexion between the two. These antiphons and psalms are joined in the Office by passages of Scripture and responsories, which have a formal relationship in the structure of Matins (where the responsory is, quite literally, a response to the lesson). The lessons could be taken from Scripture (or an authoritative commentary on it), or could be taken from another textual source, ranging from an established saint's life with its own textual tradition to a newly constructed text written by the author of the Office. They were supplemented by responsory texts which were typically newly written by the author, in a form which allowed the first section to be repeated after the verse. The music allowed various words, syllables, or ideas to be set to chant in striking ways.

Keeping all this information in mind, we should consider the possibility that, for the literate, another means of participation was through ever-new opportunities for exploring the meaning of the rites, the conjunction of texts, and the allegorical interpretations that might result. Thinking about the purpose and function of the rites was arguably the centre of participation in the liturgy, as the commentators might agree. Our own apprehension about these rites stems from the fact that too often we take for granted (or cease to care about) the purposes of these rites, or the connexions between the ritual actions ordained by the Church and the business of our own temporal and spiritual lives.

Notes

¹ Quoted in George D. Kilpatrick, *The Eucharist in Bible and Liturgy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 18.

² Justin Martyr, *The First Apology*, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to AD 325*, vol. 1: *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe (New York: Christian Literature Publishing, 1885), chap. LXVI, "Of the Eucharist," 159–87 at 185.

³ *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, chap. XV, 39.

⁴ *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, chap. XXXI, 31.

⁵ *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, chap. XXXI, 33.

⁶ *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, chap. XIII, 38.

⁷ Thibodeau, xviii.

⁸ Thibodeau, xxii.

⁹ Thibodeau, xix.

¹⁰ "A Treatise of the Manner and Mede of the Mass," text modernized (*LFMB*, appendix IV, 128, ll. 21–24).

Chapter 3

Working with Liturgical Sources

It is hoped that the preceding chapters have had at least one effect on the reader: the realization that the study of the medieval liturgy is a frustrating but potentially rich and fulfilling exercise, which can tell us a great deal not only about the worship of the Church but also about the people who practised it. Nevertheless, earlier chapters may also have indicated—correctly—that previous scholarship is problematic and difficult to use, owing to misconceptions and outdated ideas, and the reader may feel that going back to first principles, ignoring what has come before, would represent too much effort with too little gain. These observations are worth noting even by those with considerable experience in liturgical studies, and by those experienced in liturgical performance.

Happily, this chapter suggests how one might be able to use, and not to use, the existing editions and scholarship which have come down to us from the last two centuries, and which have never been more available, thanks to efforts to digitize manuscripts and early prints, not to mention the scarce modern books which often record previous generations' liturgiological efforts.

Here, I discuss "liturgical studies" as a discipline which, in reality, stands within other specialities, perhaps because it lacks a unitary identity (does any discipline

have one?). I then consider some of the ways that recent work has challenged the orthodoxies which dominated liturgical scholarship well past the mid-point of the twentieth century, even though scholars of previous generations had raised questions about them. I address some of the old editions and other resources which have come down to us and which are ubiquitous in many libraries, and suggest some productive ways in which they might be used without problems, before reflecting on some of the ways that the digital turn in scholarship may be beneficial—but also possibly dangerous—to some areas of liturgical research. Finally, I return to the idea of “liturgiology” as a discipline, seeking to reimagine it in light of some of the trends in scholarly working in the twenty-first century.

An “Amateur” Occupation

It has often been the case that a great deal of liturgical work has been done by specialists in other disciplines, or indeed by amateurs (in the most positive sense of that word). John Wickham Legg, editor of the most accessible edition of the Sarum Missal, was a consultant physician whose other major work was *A Guide to the Examination of the Urine*. Walter Howard Frere, although a textual scholar of the first order and an architect of liturgical revision in his own time, managed to fit his editorial work around the demands of his day job as bishop of Truro and member of the monastic Community of the Resurrection. M. R. James, now known especially for his ghost stories, which were first shared with members of King’s College, Cambridge during his long career there, was responsible for a large quantity of catalogues of medieval manuscripts, and, from a background in biblical scholarship, also developed a skilled approach to liturgical and art historical materials.

His greatest advice to aspiring students of manuscripts was: "See manuscripts for yourself. Do not trust that the cataloguer has told you everything." James himself would not probably have called himself a liturgical scholar, but the number of liturgical manuscripts which passed through his hands as a cataloguer, from all the major libraries of Britain and from a diversity of medieval English rites and historical periods, meant that he was no doubt one of the most knowledgeable on that score. As I have written above, the civil servant-turned-Benedictine confrater Edmund Bishop held a part-time post in the Privy Council Office, which permitted him to spend long hours looking at manuscripts and calendars in the British Museum and to contribute to the project of reviving, in the twentieth century, devotion to English saints.

No self-identifying professionalized discipline of "liturgical studies" has existed until the relatively recent past, and where such a thing exists it is mainly dominated by studies of the early Church and of pastoral or practical matters. As it stands, theologians, musicians, and (art) historians are among the most frequent to be initiated into the minutiae of liturgical books and their rites, often as a practical consequence of working on related topics. Aside from a few options on specialist postgraduate courses, and the often limited theoretical teaching about the liturgy in the ordination courses of various churches, there are few educational opportunities. To call oneself a "liturgist" is a peculiar thing indeed, and bespeaks a greater confidence in the coherence of the discipline than may ever have existed.

Very little of this diatribe could be considered optimistic about the chances of future scholars, and one of the great problems, highlighted above, is the fact that few resources that already exist can be used "off the peg," as it were.

Liturgical Text: Something to Be Constructed, Not Excavated

In general, it ought to be understood that a published transcription of a single manuscript or printed book, however contextualized and philologically perfect, does not constitute a definitive text, because the very notion is contradictory to the way that we understand the material. Liturgical books (at least those of the Middle Ages) are not accurate copies of an authorized text, as might be seen in the context of medieval witnesses of a coherent text by a named author: whilst there are divergences within the textual tradition of Dante's *Commedia* or Augustine's *City of God*, every copy of such a text is a copy of an original, and no one doubts that there is a correct version which can or should be excavated. Liturgical books, on the other hand, have limited coherence, because no two missals or breviaries have precisely the same history. Indeed, no two copies of "the" Sarum Breviary, even two copies used in the same building (perhaps even used in Salisbury Cathedral), are identical, and their contents are not hugely easy to use: remember the Wycliffite observation that it took a great deal of time with an Ordinal to decipher what should be done. In a sense, the coherence of liturgical books may be found in the rites for which they give the instructions, which must necessarily take a single form when they are performed. But this requires a range of choices to be made, just as in other types of performance. Breviaries and missals are not musical scores or play scripts (which in the modern era tend to be a copy of a cohesive original), though we might learn some lessons from these; one cannot bring a performance of a work to the stage by simply reading the text, because the way in which the instructions are interpreted is down to the knowledge and insight of those staging it.

In a liturgical context, the task of “performing” is even more challenging, because in many cases we need to navigate the book in order to determine what the text and music may be for any given occasion. Let us consider what it takes to produce a relatively straightforward service, for instance Vespers on a feast day.

The opening responses (O God, come to my assistance / O Lord, make haste to help me / Glory be ...) would probably be known by heart and sung to a familiar formula, though a different formula might be found in the only place these responses tend to appear in the volume, namely the exemplar usually found at the beginning of Advent Sunday, which showed the form for the rest of the year. The psalm-antiphon might be found, for an important feast, in the Sanctorale (probably at the back of the book), but the Psalms themselves, five in number, might be the psalms of the relevant weekday (and therefore indicated and written in full in the Psalter, though they would probably be known by heart), or non-sequential psalms might be indicated by *incipits* (for instance, *Beatus vir qui non abiit* abbreviated to *Beatus*, which we know as Psalm 1). The tone for the singing of the psalm depends on the mode of the antiphon, so a brief conspectus of tone and ending are typically given with the music for the antiphon. In any event, the psalm is not “pointed” or set musically, so the number of syllables and where the note changes would be dependent on the training and habits of the singers. The Chapter or short reading might be indicated fully or, where it is a well-known sentence of Scripture, might be given by a short *incipit*. It is intoned to a formula and rarely given any notation, so this would also be dependent on practice. The hymn, especially if not a special hymn for the day, would possibly be indicated by *incipit* alone (say, *Martyr Dei*) with no notation, with the knowledge of both text and chant assumed, or, if it was a special hymn, the first verse might

be set to music, with the subsequent verses appearing only as text. If the versicle and response are indicated, typically the response is not written out but assumed to be in the memory. Normally the Magnificat antiphon, if proper to the feast, is given in full in both text and music, and the Magnificat (indicated by its *incipit*) follows without any music, the chants being taken, as with the psalm-antiphon, from the tone and ending which follow the antiphon. The Collect follows the Magnificat, which would probably be written in full, but intoned according to custom. Above all, the process of entering the choir, beginning the service, standing, bowing, kneeling, and side-by-side singing of the psalms and Magnificat might all be drawn from the exemplar at the beginning of Advent, or possibly taken from another manuscript or known by heart according to a different pattern.

It will be clear that the precise enactment of the text and music, even to the partial degree that a modern musical score might provide, requires an awareness and familiarity with the conventions of practice in any given community, and some decisions to be made as to what these might be if they are not known. Given these considerations, we should see that liturgical text, as it appears in the manuscripts, occupies an entirely different ontology to a complete, continuous text by a named author, and in order to use some of the existing resources demands a sea change in attitude. They are usable, though, as indications of what a single written text might have looked like, or as synthetic amalgams, depending on what editorial interventions have been made. The required attitude to liturgical text, and to text more generally, necessitates being less tied to the notion of a single text which is stable, regular, fixed, and authoritative—quite the opposite attitude to the one held by earlier generations of editors. Liturgical witnesses, in reality, live a dual identity,

both as written records of performance practice and as an opportunity to confect a textual reality for any particular liturgical celebration which is itself a product of new composition (of text or music or both), perhaps of the antiphons and hymn, and a selective use of the Scriptural and especially psalmodic textual tradition as the foundation and complement to these new creations. The text is not rendered present in its totality except in performance, a somewhat fleeting medium.

The Available Resources

Suppose that today we want to be able to reconstruct the texts and music for an office, perhaps to know how and with what pre-existing and newly written texts a particular saint of interest to us was commemorated.

An obvious place to start would be Francis Procter and Christopher Wordsworth's transcription of the 1531 Sarum Breviary printed in Paris by Claude Chevallon and Francis Regnault, published by Cambridge University Press between 1879 and 1886 (and known frequently as "Procter and Wordsworth"). These three volumes, often called an edition of "the" Sarum Breviary, have become a standard open-shelf resource in many libraries, and, like many books now in the public domain, have also been digitized and made available online.¹ It is a commonplace in this type of liturgical work that the resources most readily available (i.e. online, in most libraries, and so on) are often the only ones consulted, and indeed this collection is often used (as in Neil Ker's *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, where its short title is "Brev. Sar.") as a definitive edition, just as one might use a definitive edition of the *City of God*, with variants from the "correct" version of the text reported in the manuscript's description. The slight difficulty here is that

the “Brev. Sar.” uses an exemplar, the so-called “Great Breviary,” which differs in some of its contents from the preponderance of the manuscript (and indeed the printed) tradition: in addition to some divergences in the liturgical calendar, level of rubrication, and in its spoken texts, the Sanctorale of the 1531 print also contains some divergent and unusual contents, including proper principal and translation feasts of Erkenwald, patron of London, which are very rare in the MS tradition. As a breviary, the 1531 print contains complete lessons for Matins, but these are very frequently different from those which are found elsewhere in the tradition (which is itself heterogeneous), so comparison of lessons is quite challenging. It might have been logical for the printed tradition to build on the majority readings from the manuscripts, but this did not happen, at least in this edition. Even within editions by a single printer there are disparities, suggesting that the printed tradition is neither a collation of the most important versions from the manuscripts nor any more coherent in itself.

“Brev. Sar.” is a fairly representative example of late nineteenth-century liturgical editions, especially in the sense that it was entirely dependent on a single medieval exemplar. It is also, with the York breviary transcribed by Stephen Lawley and published by the Surtees Society, the only meaningful body of English Office texts to exist in a modern print. Another significant project was the Sarum Missal produced by the aforementioned John Wickham Legg, a substantial undertaking which examined three principal MS witnesses as well as a range of other material, and provides an apparatus for study. It is worth noting that Legg’s three chosen witnesses themselves contain a range of material, though it is clear that they all reference the same *ordo* and textual tradition. These variants ought to highlight for the user of the edition that

manuscript (and indeed printed) liturgical books vary, one from another, in ways that ought to provoke the reader. It is also worth noting that neither missal nor breviary contains the musical settings to which almost all the text was set, so some alternative resource will be necessary to collect that information, if it is needed.

The best option, of course, is to draw material directly from the primary sources, and, given a breviary, this might well be possible in the manner shown above. A wealth of early printed editions can be identified through Pollard and Redgrave's *Short-Title Catalogue* and found on the Internet (especially at archive.org, Early English Books Online, and in institutional—i.e. library—repositories). These are easy to use if one is familiar with navigating the structures of liturgical books, and it is often possible to skim to the relevant material.

Another attractive option, of course, is to use the manuscript witnesses. Almost all of these which survive (at least of the English liturgy) are in readily accessible libraries and archives in universities, cathedrals, and other institutions, and good surrogates exist where access is difficult, in the form of microfilm and microfiche and, more latterly, digital images. Choirbooks do of course contain the musical notation which indicates the chants, but readers will still need to reconcile different witnesses, and the chants are wont to vary as much as the texts do. The palaeographical challenges of late medieval Gothic textualis are not very great but the reader is also forced to deal with the often very significant abbreviation which happens in liturgical manuscripts. In addition to the usual sorts of contraction of words, entire texts are abbreviated (for instance, *Christe q l e* for *Christe qui lux es*, requiring a knowledge of what the possibilities might be; or *Cantate i*, a word and a number to stand in for the thirteen verses of the first of the two psalms, 96 and 98, which begin

Cantate domino canticum novum). Liturgical manuscripts, like others, are quite sparing in their use of white space in the text block, and are often written with no line breaks and the order of texts quite illogical. An ability to recognize structures based on the use of initials, colour, and rubrication can be important.

Arguably the best-known and most widely distributed sources of English plainchant are of “the” *Graduale* and *Antiphonale Sarisburiense*, both edited by Walter Howard Frere. Both are photographic facsimiles, rather than editions, of a manuscript gradual and an antiphonal. While Frere makes a good deal of reference to the other surviving materials, the nature of the photographic medium makes it difficult for any conclusions to be clearly indicated. Indeed, looking at the facsimile of the *Graduale* one will note that the photographs are in the main of “a manuscript of the thirteenth century” (London, British Library, Additional MS 12194), but they are supplemented, where that volume is lacking, with leaves from two other manuscripts (London, British Library, Additional MS 17001, and Oxford, Bodleian, MS Rawlinson liturg. d. 3), as if their contents were interchangeable. Similarly, Frere’s photographed antiphonal, (Cambridge, University Library, Mm.ii.9), is substantially complete but is supplemented with leaves from other manuscripts. Interestingly, Mm.ii.9 was a good choice as an exemplar: in a recent essay I suggest that its melodic tradition, unlike that of some other manuscript sources, is very close to that of the first and only printed Sarum antiphonal (printed 1519–1520 in Paris); these witnesses may suggest that melodic “drift” in at least some places was relatively minimal between the late thirteenth century and the early sixteenth!²

In some cases, of course, it will not be possible to use manuscript sources, either for reasons of practicality or as a result of their inaccessibility.

“Digital Liturgy”

The Internet has become a place where huge quantities of liturgical material can be indexed, searched, accessed, and stored. The capacities of hypertext allow readers to look up material (for instance, to expand an *incipit*), and the medium is conducive to the recording of material which is systematic and ordered, such as liturgical text. Some of the earliest materials on the Internet were the tables and inventories which were part of originally analogue projects, such as the six-volume *Corpus antiphonarium officii* produced by René-Jean Hesbert, which were converted to a format displayable online, and the “born-digital” projects of Ruth Steiner (the Cantus database) and Andrew Hughes (*Late Medieval Liturgical Offices*). The Cantus Planus databases, based at Regensburg, are also a vital resource, ranging from brief notes of thousands of manuscripts to interactive tools to help determine a manuscript’s provenance. A wide range of these data sets are available, providing everything from liturgical concordances of specific antiphons to transcriptions to biblical sources of texts. Many of these, especially the older ones, have been constructed over decades, funded by grants, and based in academic institutions, but some more recent resources and repositories are the product of individual labour on a very similar scale and quality. Some of these resources, in an attempt to be comprehensive, are good at offering wide coverage, however, and therefore tend not to prioritize transcription of multiple sources ascribed to the same Use. This is fine, as long as it is understood. It must be clear that transcriptions or summaries of a single manuscript do not speak for anything other than that specific witness, and the fact that this apparent truism needs frequent repetition means that the message has not yet “got through.”

As will be clear, though, liturgical material lends itself quite neatly to electronic transcription: it is structured and capable of abbreviation and machine-reading. It is extremely convenient to be able to use conventional tools on the computer to compare two or more readings of the same text, but it is also possible to set up bespoke databases and websites to record, compare, and analyse the contents of manuscripts.

Music

This convenience extends to music, since plainchant (that is, music with a single melodic line and no rhythmic information given in the notation) may be conveniently recorded using alphanumeric characters which can be read by the computer; a program can then compare two copies of a melody, or search for a particular melodic motif (for instance, a cadence) within a single melody or within an entire corpus. In a more sophisticated undertaking, it would be possible to search for instances of a single word from the corpus together with their musical settings. The data can be easily organized, for instance with each word being associated with the service, genre, and position within the service (i.e. Matins antiphon 1) and its musical setting, allowing for comparisons using any of these parameters (i.e. looking for all Matins responsories during Lent in mode 3).

Plainchant is uniquely suitable for this type of analysis: the notation (which can be read by anyone who can read modern notation) does not supply information about duration or rhythm, which means that a string of notes can be recorded as an alphabetic sequence, for instance using the a-p system of alphabetic notation. The computer font Volpiano (named after William of Volpiano, associated with this system) will display the relevant note on a stave

when a key is depressed, and will therefore produce notation readable by humans as musical information, but also (because associated with an ASCII character) readable by computers. This typeface has been popularized by use in the Cantus database, which uses it for transcriptions of melodic material. Other such systems of notation have been constructed; the one used by Andrew Hughes in the data files of *Late Medieval Liturgical Offices* is primarily numerical and based on the position of any note with respect to the modal Final (1 being the Final, 3 a third above).

With the musical data, many possibilities present themselves: it would be possible for someone with very limited musical knowledge or confidence to transcribe the data, and even to study it meaningfully. In many cases (I am as guilty of this as anyone else), music has been ignored or avoided in liturgical studies which involve the text, and to omit this material is really to omit half the evidence.

How might one wish to use the power of the computer in analysing a wide range of chants? If scrutinizing a single item—an antiphon, for example—it is just as simple to look at the music with one's own eyes. Considering an office's worth (or more) of such material might allow one to consider trends within a population, to try to understand some of the elements of "style" within this poorly understood repertory. It would be possible, for instance, to consider the frequency of particular pitches, modally significant and otherwise, within chants of a single mode; on which syllables or words do they lie most heavily? What can be said about the range of different populations of chants, or in different modes? How might this relate to tessitura (the range in which most notes of the melody may be found), and which words are set to the extremities of range? What are the most frequently

occurring pitches and what significance might they have? What is the overall contour of the melody? What relation might this have to the form or structure of the chant? Is a chant predominantly conjunct in contour (moving by step) or disjunct (by leap), and where do the most significant points of disjuncture occur? What *musica ficta* are suggested?

How are the words set to melody? Are they predominantly syllabic (as antiphons might stereotypically be) or predominantly melismatic (like many long responsories)? On which words might the melismas tend to fall? (Are they significant words in their meaning, or is the melisma, as in responsory verses, quite often at the end of the chant?) How long is the average melisma and what is significant about any outliers by extreme length or brevity? More generally, how long is the setting of each syllable, and each word?

All these ideas can be explored profitably with transcriptions of music across an extensive corpus, provided that sufficient background information is provided (liturgical and textual context, mode, and so on). There is no more satisfactory way of analysing a wide range of material! I hope that anyone with an interest in liturgy for which music is present may be encouraged to think about what this musical material might add to his or her observations. There has traditionally been a surfeit of musicologically trained students of liturgy who have been astute in these types of observations, but musicology could do much more to welcome others who are not already experts in this area, and to offer resources which non-specialists might be able to use. Non-specialists, for their part, need to be bold in being open to music as a possible subject of interest which is not separate at all from the others (the text, the codex) that are more widely studied.

The Use and Misuse of Digital Resources

Textual editing and comparative work are perhaps more mainstream than their application to liturgical scholarship, and have been incorporating electronic methods for perhaps longer: a wide range of tools have produced such resources as concordances for many years. They have also been used in the traditional philological exercise of developing a principal text with its variants, and keeping track of multiple versions. Microsoft Word itself has this capacity, though there are many types of software—including Juxta (www.juxtasoftware.org), described as “collation software for scholars”—to help keep track of multiple versions of a single work. It is worth noting, though, that Juxta (and other such software) is intended for one to use with modern sources and for texts (for instance, modern poetry) for which there may be either a single version alone or a few quite distinct revisions. Liturgically speaking, purpose-built databases can help to record transcriptions of everything from a single work to the inventory of an entire manuscript. I have produced databases in commercially available software which also allow items to be associated with their liturgical context.

These observations omit the fact that a great deal is owed to the Internet, both in managing and in sharing digital content. Most of the resources already mentioned are accessible via a web interface, making them available to all, including those outside the academic umbrella. But this immersive digital environment also presents some serious challenges.

First, the old chestnut: the most convenient witness becomes the most authoritative. The digital revolution has helped us to become uncritical. In the wider discipline of musicology, for instance, it is becoming a commonplace that, rather than using a commonly recognized edition of

a musical work which needs to be borrowed from the university library, students opt to work on an edition which is out of copyright and therefore online. There seems to be no self-analysing mechanism to correct this oversight. This continues to be the case even when, by rights, it should be possible to consult a wealth of resources from around the world. Closely associated with this problem is the reduction of contextual information, meaning that images may be separated from their metadata—and even from their identity or siglum. The images themselves may not have metadata, or appropriate metadata, or even a folio number (where is this image from? What is its scale? What volume is it part of?). Composite manuscripts may have leaves of different sizes in different hands, making even palaeographical identification difficult. Finally, it is tempting, but dangerous, to produce descriptions or to make a study of a manuscript that one has not actually seen or handled; digitization is not an exact science, and is very much prone to error both in photography and in constructing the metadata. The facsimiles, as well as the cataloguing, might therefore be suspect.

Digitization is a very helpful tool which helps us to become familiar with material from all over the world. It has also meant that images from medieval manuscripts are available, in copious quantities, to anyone who might wish them. This, too, is no bad thing, because people with no prior experience are being introduced, in one way or another, to one of the most complicated, beautiful, and artisanal types of object from the Middle Ages. It is a little galling, however, when photographers, or those who produce online galleries of manuscript images, choose to prioritize the digitization of attractive or illuminated manuscripts over those with a more workaday approach to decoration. Some liturgical books are, of course, highly decorated; some of these were altar books, and others

may well have been presentation volumes. It seems, though, that sometimes the least attractive volumes were the most well thumbed and consulted, and therefore probably more influential. The several Sarum Ordinals which survive, for instance, are limited in their decoration, and even the scribal hands are not very elegant. Sometimes the illuminated leaves of volumes, as in the British Library's stock of images, are photographed, leaving the rest of the volume unrepresented. In all these circumstances digitization does not help the student of manuscripts, and relegates a potentially helpful volume to the status of curiosity.

It is this undeserved status which is perhaps the most dangerous result of the digital revolution. Since medieval manuscripts are conventionally complex and ornate objects whose decoration belies the significance of their contents, it is not surprising that images drawn from them have gone the way of cats and dogs and become fodder for posting on social media and the Internet for the shock value or amusement caused by some of their features, especially images that are irreligious, scurrilous, provocative, or even scatological. It is undoubtedly true that many of these images were intended to capture attention. But they give a somewhat different and unintended impression of the priorities and character of those who produced them, and, for those for whom the experience of medieval manuscripts may only be through the context of social media, notwithstanding the merit of sharing them with a wider public, a further unintended consequence may be that the entire context of the image may be dismissed whilst the curiosity itself becomes a "meme."

It might be argued that, since all signifiers are arbitrary and unstable, these images can be deployed in any way imaginable, but this is to miss the wider point that such use makes emphatic the exotic and unreachable character

of the manuscripts from which they come and of the Middle Ages more generally; they become tools of entertainment rather than artefacts which help to tell something about the civilization for which they were made. This phenomenon is heightened since manuscript images are often shared on social media in the same way as pictures intended to elicit an instant reaction. The objectification of the decoration helps us to forget that such features would not exist and would not have been perpetuated, and no such book would have been produced, if not to convey its principal contents. What happens when an image, really intended to draw the eye and to serve as a mnemonic marker in a volume which is difficult to navigate, is uncoupled from the material which it serves as a paratext? It becomes a text into which meaning and significance is read when none existed, in the doodlings of a talented scribe.

These thought are not intended to promote or inspire a Luddite reaction to the “digital humanities” or to social media, or to overanalyse behaviour that is not deliberate, but merely to point out a couple of habits that have become the status quo whereby liturgical manuscripts, arguably the highest-register objects produced in the scriptorium, are capable of being taken out of context. They suffer from the necessarily selective process of digitization, which is both more and less likely to pay them any attention; multiple witnesses of the same material rarely exist (unless a canonical text or highly decorated); and images are as difficult for the non-specialist to interpret as the source manuscripts. Furthermore, when material in liturgical manuscripts is taken out of context, we lose the ability to learn anything from them other than to appreciate them as beautiful objects, which is to ignore or lose almost all the evidence from these hugely valued and important cultural artefacts.

Reimagining “Liturgiology”

Having considered the historiography around English liturgical books, and some of the preconceptions with which we have considered their contents, I would like to conclude this book with some observations about the present state of work and some suggestions for the future of liturgical studies.

1. The research and labours of others must be carefully considered, treated with care, and judiciously used when possible. We should value what has been done well, especially work to transcribe and make available various rarities and the tremendous effort, since the early 2000s, to put a great deal of material online. But we also need to be aware of the methodologies and assumptions which previous generations have employed. Editions which are really transcriptions need to be treated as such. The digital revolution and radical access to primary material has made it easy to be uncritical about the sources that we use, for, when an online copy of a work is accessible, in these times it automatically becomes the default version. No one is completely innocent of this folly.
2. We need to think about new ways of recording material and making it available for students and researchers to use. In many cases this may involve digitization, transcription, and translation, which help to bring materials to a wider audience, but it may also require more innovative approaches, such as resources which help to bring the wider experience of medieval worship alive.

It would also be helpful to remind ourselves of some of the reasons that liturgical materials are interesting outside the relatively limited circle of those who are interested in the texts and music for their own sake.

3. Liturgical books give us an excellent opportunity to witness the phenomenon of the “*mouvance*” discussed by Paul Zumthor in relation to medieval text, and to see it at work through several generations or recensions of works which are of the highest cultural importance.
4. They offer an excellent test case for the influence of various textual and authoritative influences on something that is conventionally understood to be universal and unchanging, and to see how local variation and insight can be revealed by witnesses which are partly formed through their local reaction to a trans-regional phenomenon.
5. Liturgical books are also witnesses to the most important textual stimuli for faith and devotion, both of which are incalculably more important than we can imagine for the development and flourishing of culture, for which they are at the centre; they also give an indication of important phenomena such as the distribution and popularity of saints’ cults.
6. They are the texts of which all others, save Scripture, are glosses, and one of the most important means by which people of the Middle Ages encountered Scripture.

As such, the study of medieval liturgy, far from being a staid, pious, and conservative occupation, can contribute richly to the discourses of textuality and culture in the Middle Ages. The sources show what happens when a textual tradition is received locally, and becomes a native performed reality, appropriating local practices and context and condensing them with authoritative, imposed patterns from on high.

Like other disciplines with a long history, liturgiology reminds us of the preoccupations of those who have gone before us, and probably teaches us something about ourselves in the way that we react to the methodologies and preconceived ideas which earlier scholars held, and how they make us react.

Notes

¹ Many such volumes, now in the public domain, are available for download at www.archive.org.

² Matthew Cheung Salisbury, "Stability and Variation in Office Chants of the Sarum Sanctorale," *Plainsong and Medieval Music* 27 (2018): 1–26.

Further Reading

Primary Sources

[Amalarius] *On the Liturgy*. Translated by Eric Knibbs. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.

A much-discussed liturgical treatise in two volumes.

[St. Benedict] *RB 1980: The Rule of St. Benedict in English*. Edited and translated by Timothy Fry. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1982.

The most influential blueprint for monastic life in the Middle Ages.

The Book of Common Prayer (principal revisions published in 1549, 1559, and 1662).

The first authorized liturgical book of the Church of England.

Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae, a synodo Verolamiensi AD 496 ad Londinensem AD 1717. Edited by David Wilkins. 4 vols. London: [n. publ.], 1737.

A comprehensive collection of ecclesiastical documents relating to councils in Britain and Ireland, including a large quantity of liturgical legislation.

[Durandus] *The Rationale divinatorum officiorum of William Durand of Mende*. Edited and translated by Timothy M. Thibodeau. Prologue and book 1: New York: Columbia University Press, 2007; books 2 and 3: Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2010; books 4 and 5, 2 vols.: Turnhout: Brepols, 2013–15.

The important medieval treatise which became the gold standard for allegorical explanations of the liturgy.

[Edition of] *The Hereford Breviary*. Edited by Walter Howard Frere and Langton E. G. Brown. 3 vols. London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 1904–15.

The Divine Office according to a local diocesan Use in medieval England.

[Edition of the Sarum Breviary] *Breviarium ad usum insignis ecclesiae Sarum*. Edited by Francis Procter and Christopher Wordsworth. 3 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1879–86.

A modern edition of the Divine Office from the most important liturgical Use in medieval England.

[Edition of the Sarum Missal] *Missale ad usum insignis et praeclarae ecclesiae Sarum*. Edited by Francis Henry Dickinson. Burntisland: [n. publ.], 1861.

A critical edition of the Mass as used in the southern province of England at the end of the Middle Ages.

[Another such edition] *The Sarum Missal: Edited from Three Early Manuscripts*. Edited by John Wickham Legg. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1916.

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[Edition of the York Breviary] *Breviarium ad usum insignis ecclesiae Eboracensis*. Edited by Stephen W. Lawley. 2 vols. Durham: Surtees Society, 1880–83.

A modern edition of the Divine Office from the second most important liturgical Use in medieval England.

[Isidore of Seville] *De ecclesiasticis officiis*. Edited and translated by Thomas L. Knoebel. New York: Newman Press, 2008.

An early treatise on the liturgy from a prolific allegorical author.

The Lay Folks Mass Book, or, The Manner of Hearing Mass with Rubrics and Devotions for the People. Edited by Thomas F. Simmons. London: Early English Text Society, 1879.

A late twelfth-century guide to personal devotion during public worship.

[*Sacrosanctum Concilium*] *The Documents of Vatican II*. Edited by Walter M. Abbott, translated by Joseph Gallagher. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966.

The document on which the liturgical reforms of the Roman Catholic Church from the 1960s onwards have been based.

[Sarum musical facsimile] *Antiphonale Sarisburiense: A Reproduction in Facsimile from Early Manuscripts*. Edited by Walter Howard Frere. Oxford: Plainsong and Medieval Music Society, 1901. Reprinted, Farnborough: Gregg Press, 1966.

A photographic facsimile of the music of the Sarum Divine Office.

[Sarum musical facsimile] *Graduale Sarisburiense: A Reproduction in Facsimile of a Manuscript of the Thirteenth*

Century. Edited by Walter Howard Frere. London: Quaritch, 1894.

A photographic facsimile of the music of the Sarum Mass.

The Use of Sarum: The Original Texts Edited from the MSS. Edited by Walter Howard Frere and Langton E. G. Brown. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1898-1901.

An introduction, edition, and commentary on the Sarum Customary and Ordinal.

Select Critical Writings

Berger, Teresa, and Bryan D. Spinks, eds. *Liturgy's Imagined Past/s: Methodologies and Materials in the Writing of Liturgical History Today*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2016.

An excellent recent collection of essays on liturgical historiography.

Carruthers, Mary. *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Carruthers's important study has changed the way we think about the medieval deployment and practice of memory.

Harper, John. *The Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy from the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century: A Historical Introduction and Guide for Students and Musicians*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.

Invaluable guide to the structures of medieval services and to their context.

Hughes, Andrew. *Late Medieval Liturgical Offices: Resources for Electronic Research*. 2 vols. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1994–95.

Data on a huge number of liturgical offices written in the Middle Ages, together with some suggestions for researching this vast corpus.

———. *Medieval Manuscripts for Mass and Office: A Guide to Their Organization and Terminology*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982.

A challenging but comprehensive introduction to the books of the medieval liturgy.

Maskell, William. *The Ancient Liturgy of the Church of England: According to the Uses of Sarum, Bangor, York, and Hereford and the Modern Roman Liturgy Arranged in Parallel Columns*. London: Pickering, 1844.

An example of nineteenth-century scholarship seeking to draw the evidence into discernible categories.

Morgan, Nigel. “The Introduction of the Sarum Kalendar into the Dioceses of England in the Thirteenth Century.” In *Thirteenth Century England VIII: Proceedings of the Durham Conference 1999*, edited by Michael Prestwich, Richard Britnell, and Robin Frame, 179–206. Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2001.

A revisionist, and correct, account of the expansion of the Use of Sarum across England.

Pfaff, Richard. *The Liturgy in Medieval England: A History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

A monumental history which treats every significant episode in the development of medieval English liturgy.

Pollard, Alfred W., and G. R. Redgrave, eds. *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475-1640*. London: Bibliographical Society, 1926 (2nd ed., revised and enlarged, edited by William A. Jackson, Frederic S. Ferguson, and Katharine F. Pantzer. 3 vols. London: Bibliographical Society, 1976-91).

The definitive guide to early printed books for English use: see especially the section titled "Liturgies," which contains a comprehensive listing of every type of liturgical book and each of the printed editions printed in Britain or for British use.

Salisbury, Matthew Cheung. *The Secular Liturgical Office in Late Medieval England*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2015.

The present author's quantitative study of variability in liturgical manuscripts purporting to be of the Uses of Sarum and York, together with other observations on the idea of "Use."

Zieman, Katherine. *Singing the New Song: Literacy and Liturgy in Late Medieval England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.

A helpful discussion of education, especially orality and literacy, emphasizing the centrality of liturgical texts and music in the literary repertoire of late medieval England.